TideArt.com

Asterix CGI breakdown video

Thu, Apr 11 2013 19:10:02 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video, the team that made the VFX work for the latest Asterix production shows a CGI breakdown of the shots.

Interview with Vanishing Point

Sat, Apr 6 2013 17:47:14 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with John from Vanishing Point, a digital marketplace for Poser and DAZ Studio 3D models.

My name is John and I started making digital artwork on an Apple II back in the 1980's. I had always been interested in art, but I couldn't draw people at all. I started using modern graphics software around 2000, when I picked up Ray Dream Studio, Bryce, and Poser. I quickly learned that I could make artwork with realistic people. As I worked to improve my art, I taught myself how to make models. Soon after that, I offered my models for free, and then started selling models on sites like Renderosity and 3D Commune.

After selling on those sites for a few years, I became disappointed with a number of their policies and rules so I decided to start my own site, called Vanishing Point. I spread the word of my site and I soon had other artists selling with me. Vanishing Point became a content provider on Smith Micro's Content Paradise and e-on software's Cornucopia3D.

Over the years, I've gone back and forth on ideas: for a while, I made sci-fi models, then I made cars and trucks, then I made real-world buildings. I now focus on vehicles and buildings mainly because these products will never go obsolete, unlike clothing which becomes obsolete when DAZ releases the next version of Vicky or Mike. I also don't like telling my customers that my product requires a product made by someone else, even if it's a free model by DAZ. Sending people to another site (especially one like DAZ) is risky since they could spend their money on that site instead of mine. I've tried selling clothing and I've had good luck selling military uniforms, but my line of fantasy clothing never caught on with buyers.

What sells the best? That sometimes surprises me! I uploaded a PT Cruiser for sale and that's become a huge success, which I didn't expect. I uploaded a Pontiac Firebird model with a free add-on to turn it into KITT (from Knight Rider), but it hasn't sold nearly as many copies. But, overall, my best sellers have been the science fiction sets inspired by the Star Trek bridges.

As for the free models, I've definitely found it gets attention and traffic. There are a lot of people who like to ''try before they buy'', so by downloading a free model they can judge the quality of the products for themselves. I also offer a lot of free product add-ons so customers can get extras for the products they buy from me.

Making free items is also a good way for new artists to start their career: by making free models, artists can build a reputation of making a certain type of model (aircraft, buildings, clothing, etc). It's easier for them to start selling models since they'll already have an audience of people who have seen the quality of their models.

What advice would I give to merchants and artists?

The main advice I would give would be to watch the community to see what other people are doing (or not doing): if everyone is making texture resource kits, then that market could be flooded with products. But if no one's making cars or sci-fi buildings, you should ask why: is it because these models are too hard for the average artist to make? If so, then this would probably be a market worth exploring.

I wrote a blog back in 2010 answering some typical customer questions. Although my answers are meant to be humorous and sarcastic, this blog raises an important point about selling: how do you deal with customers and complaints? And, unfortunately, it seems like people on the Internet have become ruder over the years. As a merchant (or website owner), you'll get questions about issues that you have no control over, such as why PayPal won't take a customer's payment or why Earthlink is blocking your site's e-mails with download links.

I followed that up with another blog talking about product ideas. This blog was designed to be a counter-point to many advice e-books that simply say ''find a niche and fill it''. Making a product (and a best-selling product) takes a lot more work than just coming up with an idea. Do you have the skills to make a product? Do you know how to make a model, UV map it, or make textures? Can you make nice sales images? And, of course, can you market and promote the product?

Would I recommend someone start their own store now? Probably not since there are too many obstacles to overcome. For example, marketing and promoting your product has become a challenge ever since DAZ and Renderosity started clamping down on outside sites.

Another issue to think about is the lack of originality in the Poser market. If you make a cool product, someone else may copy your idea. And even if their product is inferior to yours, they may have a better marketing (such as selling at DAZ). In this case, you might be accused of being the copycat simply because their product has the backing of someone like DAZ.

I'm finding that it's very hard to sell against DAZ and Renderosity since they've become a monopoly (or would that be a duopoly?) since they, by default, host the Poser community forums. Because of this, whatever they say goes. For example, as the first major Poser marketplace, Renderosity set the merchant cut of a product sale at a 50% commission. Does it really cost Renderosity 50% of a product to test the files, host the files, serve the file, and process the transaction? (Customer support is usually placed on the merchant, so there's no cost to the store.) But, since Renderosity was the first, most other stores followed, and now a 50% commission is standard... even though this would be outrageous for physical items..

In recent months, DAZ and Renderosity have all but outlawed any advertising of outside sites, ostensibly because these outside sites take business away from them. There are also rumors that DAZ is outlawing the mention of free items available at other sites, claiming that these free items could somehow take away from the products available in their store. While I agree that competing with other sites is always an issue, isn't the solution to make better quality products? And even then, how does a site like Vanishing Point (with 30 merchants) compete with Renderosity, which has close to 2,500 merchants? How does Vanishing Point, with about 7,000 members, compete with Renderosity which has 3,000 to 4,000 people on its site at any given time? (Their marketing page says they have around 250,000 members.)

Their monopoly strategy also applies to products. I have heard numerous stories from merchants who have submitted products to DAZ, but never hear back from the tester for months. Meanwhile, the product -which the merchant worked hard on- is effectively killed. I personally submitted a few products to DAZ about 8 years ago only to be told ''we do not sell products which are all ready for sale at Renderosity'', even though they lured away many Renderosity merchants to sell with them. More recently, one of my modelling partners submitted some cars and aircraft models, but again, never heard back from the testers. They eventually gave up waiting, gave me the models, and I'm now selling them at Vanishing Point.

However, an argument could be made that cars and buildings don't support DAZ's core strategy of promoting their Vicky and Mike figures. Although DAZ does sell cars and buildings, I'm sure they would

prefer clothing, poses, hair, and characters, all of which require their figures to be useful. Artists can make scenes of cars and buildings *without* needing Vicky or Mike.

A good way to not deal with product submissions is to add ever-increasing product requirements, with the thinking that only the most dedicated merchants will submit products. Over the past few years, Renderosity has added more and more product requirements, from requiring merchants to put the product readme file in a specific folder, to creating templates for models, to creating 214x214 pixel thumbnail images. (Why the odd size of 214x214 images? Because these are what fit best in their new style-sheet and obviously it was easier to tell 2,500 merchants to change their 4-10 product image thumbnails than have their programmer adjust the style-sheet.) A few times, Renderosity has also changed the size of their ''optional but required'' banner image from 690x250 pixels to 750x210 to 690x250, then back again. And ''optional but required'' means that the admins say this image is optional, but the Upload Product page stops the upload process unless this image is included.

After the product is uploaded, the product goes into testing. The store staff says products could take up to 2 weeks to be tested, and with the sheer volume of products, this might be a realistic time frame. However, in all fairness, I've found that my products are usually approved for sale within a week, and sometimes in 3 or 4 days.

On the other hand, I've been selling at Renderosity for over 10 years and I try keep up with all their changes so my product will pass through testing without any issues. But when my products had issues, I've dealt with some testers who were nice and would help me fix it, and I've dealt with some not-so-nice testers who ''just follow the rules''. These rules ''require'' the tester to put the product back at the end of the testing queue, where it would sit for another 7 days until it was re-tested.

One recent poor experience was when I uploaded a model of the Eiffel Tower. One tester said there might be a copyright issue, even though the shape of the Eiffel Tower has fallen out of copyright. The product was held in testing for almost 2 weeks... yet when I uploaded a model of a Ford sports-car a few weeks later, none of the testers mentioned anything about a possible copyright issue. (As a side note, I also uploaded a Vue version Eiffel Tower to Cornucopia3D, which is owned by e-on software, which is based in Paris, France. They made no mention about any potential copyright issue and I would expect a company located in Paris to be more familiar with French copyright law than a company in Tennessee.)

I wonder how many merchants will try to keep up with these requirements and how many won't even bother uploading a product? Will they make their product available for free on sites like ShareCG or will they not make their model available at all? Will the community lose a good artist simply because he doesn't have the organizational skills to follow Renderosity's requirements? In my opinion, marketplace sites should do everything they can to HELP the merchant get their product up for sale, instead of forcing them to go through a gauntlet of rules. After all, every product sold at the site is more money for the merchant AND the site, especially when that site is keeping 50% of the product's sale price.

Why does a site tell its merchants to make 214x214 pixel images when they've been making 200x200 images for years and years? The humorous answer is the same as asking why a 500 pound gorilla sits in the middle of a room: because he can.

Renderosity knows no one's going to quit over their requirements: merchants may complain the rules and they may threaten to quit, but realistically, merchants won't make nearly the same amount of sales on another site. Again, since most Poser users are at DAZ and Renderosity, it doesn't make financial sense to NOT sell there.

Though to be fair, in all the years I've been selling at Renderosity, every single payment from them (every month, sometimes twice a month), has been on time. I've sold at other sites that have paid late or had ''accounting issues'' which delayed payment, but I won't mention any names. So, while there are definitely hurdles to overcome to sell at Renderosity, once you start making money, they pay on time.

Mozilla and EPIC ports Unreal to the browser

Thu, Mar 28 2013 9:05:27 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Mozilla teamed up with EPIC to port the Unreal Engine to WebGL. This allows high end games to run in the browser.

An introduction to Bitcoin

Fri, Mar 22 2013 23:54:25 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

If you offer commissions or work freelance, you may have encountered a client before that offered to pay you using Bitcoins. Maybe you know some things about this virtual currency, or perhaps you just heard the name before without really knowing anything about it. If this never happened to you, with the rise in popularity of Bitcoin, you may eventually find yourself in this situation. Here is a short primer on what this currency is, how it works, and whether you should accept it as payment.

The implications of Bitcoin

Bitcoin is a recent invention that uses various algorithms and cryptographic functions to ensure a predictable growth of the currency. It's a virtual currency, which means there is no government backing. This can be good and bad. The good is that you don't have the artificial inflation which occurs in real-world currencies. The USD or EUR currencies are highly dependent on the countries that back them. As you may be aware, there are a lot of financial troubles in some EU countries, and as a result the EUR value is going down. Government control also means taxes, fees and the potential for massive fluctuations based on the health of the Federal Reserve and other private banks.

On the other hand, while Bitcoins don't suffer from these issues, this also means speculators and unpredictable factors may influence the value of these coins. Right now, the value of Bitcoins change constantly. The USD value of one Bitcoin can go from $40 to $63 in a few days, which is a massive change, and makes it hard to value your goods or services properly. The other problem is that it can be hard to convert real-world currencies to Bitcoins. There are various online exchanges, but most of them only accept direct bank transfers, not PayPal or credit cards, because of fraud problems. They charge a fee, and take some time to transfer funds. The amount of time needed and the fees vary a lot between sites, again because there is no regulation.

Getting started

Getting started using Bitcoins is fairly easy. Just like cash, your virtual coins represent a certain value. However, for Bitcoins that value reside in an ever changing chain, which is a large mathematical block of data which exists across the Internet, replicated on thousands of sites and computers. All transactions are public, and when someone sends you coins, the transaction is transmitted across this chain, validating the transfer. You own a wallet, which is a simple encrypted file and contains your private key to these coins. You should think of this wallet like your cash wallet. If you lose it, then you lose the coins that's in it.

Your wallet can be stored on your own computer by downloading one of the many clients available, or it can

be kept in the cloud, by using one of the online services. The way you transfer money is using Bitcoin addresses. Your wallet has one or more addresses. For someone to send you coins, you simply give them one of your addresses, and they can send you some coins. Sending them coins works the same way. Because you can create an unlimited number of addresses, while Bitcoin is a very public and visible system, the only thing seen by others is your Bitcoin address. So it's possible to make anonymous transactions.

If you want to try it out, you should check out the Bitcoin site to find out more and to download your client. Remember that as a new currency, you must be careful who you trust as transactions cannot be reversed, and funds are not guaranteed by any government.

Pros:

* Can be anonymous
* Very easy to send and receive money
* No government control or fees
* Does not suffer from artificial inflation

Cons:

* Can be hard to get started
* Value varies a lot
* Can be more risky

Enlighten Engine lighting demo

Thu, Mar 21 2013 20:29:11 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The Enlighten Engine has been announced for next generation consoles like the PS4, providing real-time rendering. This demo shows the lighting in this new engine.

Wacom 13HD hands-on

Thu, Mar 21 2013 6:01:55 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Engadget posted a hands-on video showing the latest Wacom tablet, the Cintiq 13HD.

Nvidia GTC 2013 demos

Thu, Mar 21 2013 1:00:56 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Nvidia showed off some real-time 3D graphics at GTC 2013, showcasing some of their new technologies that can be used in film making and animations.

MAXON and Adobe alliance

Wed, Mar 20 2013 15:36:49 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

MAXON, the developer of Cinema 4D, and Adobe announced a new partnership which will help to integrate products from both companies.

The press release says that both companies will start cooperating on technology that will allow software such as Cinema 4D and After Effects to better collaborate, in order to provide a more seamless pipeline for 2D/3D work. At a press event, Steve Forde from Adobe says that the two software already talk to each other, but they want them to communicate at a much more fundamental level, and this partnership will allow them to do so.

There is no detail yet for when this type of integration will be available to users.

Blender 3D Minecraft mash-up

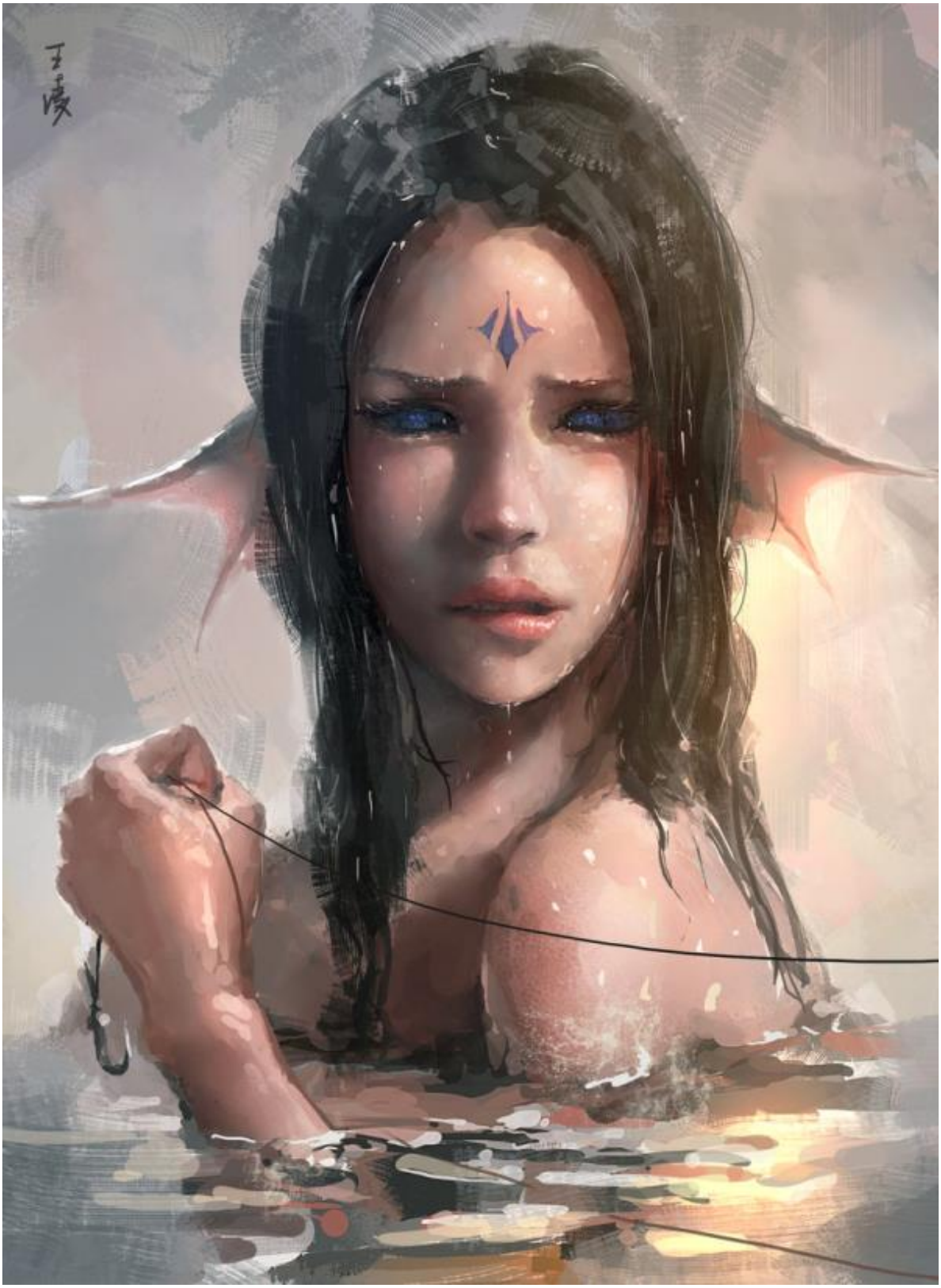
Tue, Mar 19 2013 23:32:05 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under videos

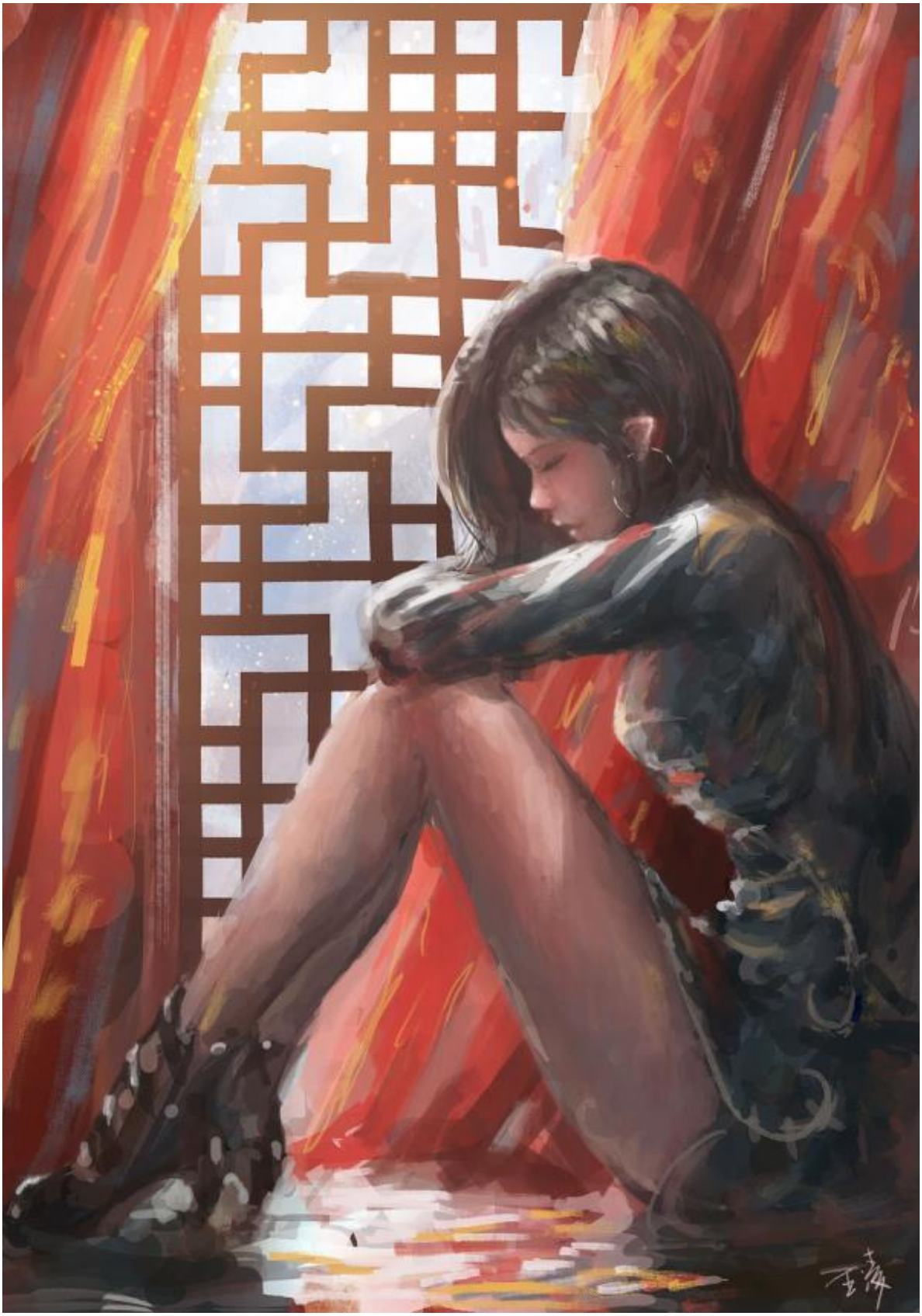
Mokazon from the Blender 3D development team has created an interesting mash-up between Minecraft and Blender.

Artist showcase: Wang Ling

Tue, Mar 19 2013 21:36:53 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature the art of Wang Ling, an artist from the People's Republic of China.





Wacom Cintiq 13HD

Tue, Mar 19 2013 13:07:29 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Wacom introduced its latest generation of drawing tablets, the Cintiq 13HD.

Adobe scholarship registration open

Mon, Mar 18 2013 20:25:16 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

As part of the Adobe Youth Voices program, the company has announced $1 million in scholarships for young artists.

The funds are part of their Creativity Scholarships program for the youth where Adobe wants to support the next generation of creative thinkers and equip them with resources to apply creative confidence to advance their education in creative fields. This scholarship is aimed at high school students who will go through a college degree or certificate program. Those interested have until March 31st to sign up.

3DS MAX 2014 rendering improvements

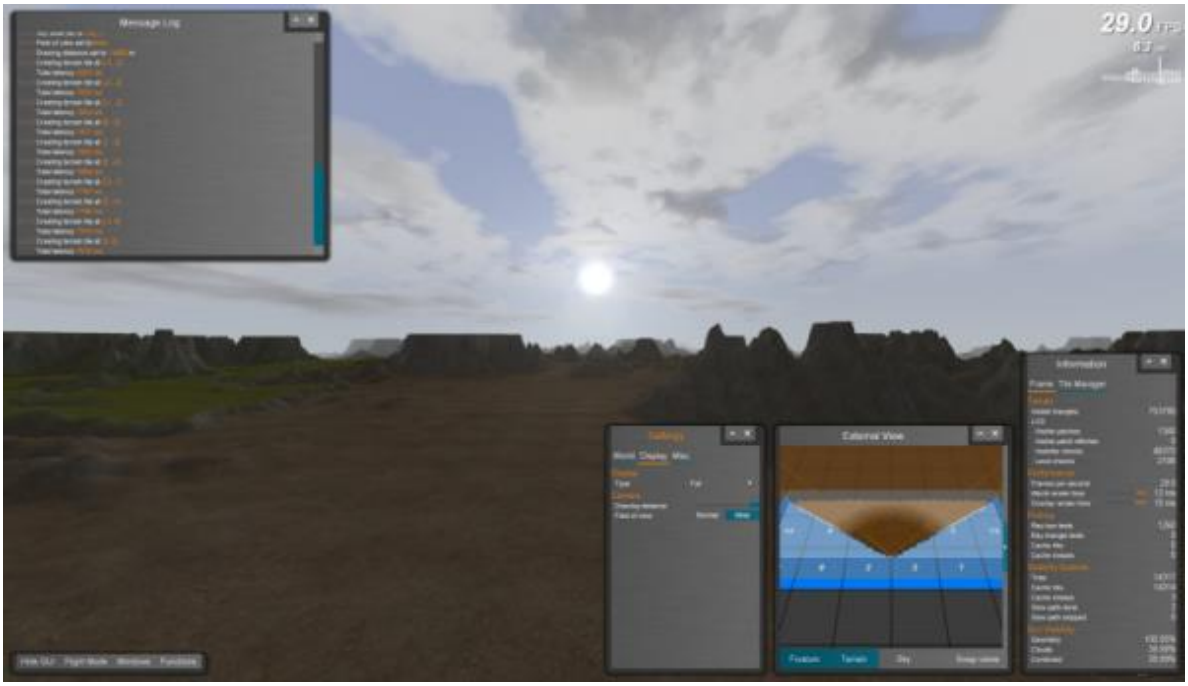
Mon, Mar 18 2013 20:18:10 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Autodesk released yet another of its sneak peek videos, this time showing how rendering will be improved in 3DS MAX in the next version.

Interview with Zephyros Anemos

Sun, Mar 17 2013 22:57:12 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Zephyros Anemos, the creator of Project Windstorm.



Could you briefly describe yourself?

I was born in 1974. I'm not dead yet, which apparently counts as a success of some sort. I live in Greece. You should come visit us during the summer!

Is your background mostly in coding or 3D design?

I have been lucky enough to have access to a computer since I was 8 years old, in a time when this was very uncommon. It was a ZX Specturm 48K (look it up young whippersnappers, it's well worth your time) that the father of my best friend had brought back to him as a gift from his visit to Spain. We started programming that very same day, quickly wearing out those little adorable rubber keys. I haven't stopped

since. Good times!

What is Project Windstorm?

It's the result of my efforts to familiarize myself with JavaScript and web development in general. I have always been programming for the desktop, doing all sorts of things all these years. At some point, I realized that a great future lies in developing for the web (yeah, I'm always that quick on the uptake) and I was being late to the party! I haven't had any contact whatsoever with web development before, so I grabbed my text editor, found an online WebGL tutorial and spent the first few minutes very confused about the fact that JavaScript objects seemed to already posses any named member I could think of setting a value to. Eventually, things got better.

On a more serious note, Project Windstorm actually consists of two parts that evolved in parallel: the terrain engine and a WebGL GUI. Why build a GUI you say? Well, at some point, I needed a way to view and modify variables in real time. The JavaScript console is very useful, but it can only go so far. Plus, designing and implementing a GUI can be really rewarding in its own right. It all started with a scrolling list of strings and an input prompt and it kinda grew from there...

What languages, libraries or frameworks did you use to create it?

It's all written in JavaScript, with some GLSL mixed in for good measure. I'm not sure if the latter part even counts. No external libraries or frameworks were harmed during the making of Windstorm. I used Sublime Text 2 as my text editor, which I highly recommend. Development early on was done mainly on the latest Chrome Canary, while also testing against Firefox Nightly. Things have changed lately, since there has been some impressive work done by the Mozilla guys on Firefox's development tools.

Was your goal mostly to showcase HTML5 and WebGL or to keep developing it towards an actual product?

My goal was to learn JavaScript while also having fun. I've worked with terrain rendering in OpenGL before and using WebGL inside a Canvas element kept me pretty close to my comfort zone. Once I've written the first few thousand lines of code, it was clear that this could be turned into a nice online tutorial for the benefit of anybody wishing to implement a basic terrain engine. In that respect, I think it turned out OK. It's fun to experiment with and see the behavior of the algorithms used.

Can you tell us a bit about what goes on behind the scenes?

The terrain engine makes a valiant effort to download and prepare the data needed to present the illusion of an infinite terrain to the user. This must be done without disrupting the frame rate too much. Rendering a nice view of the terrain as quickly as possible is also very important. During all of this, the internal workings of the algorithms are being exposed to the user as much as possible. A detailed write-up can be found on www.zephyrosanemos.com.

How long did it take you to create?

Can't really say for sure, since I didn't make it all in one go. The first time I opened the browser with the intent of developing for the web was a year and a half ago. During that time, I've built some other things as well (a 3D graphics engine, a CAD-like 3D model viewer to test the engine with and an application I'd like to turn into a start-up someday).

If I had to guess, I'd say that the terrain took me 3 to 4 months, the GUI a bit more than that, plus two more for really polishing the demo. Hard to say though, since everything was done in parallel, with even a few dead periods in-between.

What kind of feedback have you seen so far?

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, sometimes downright embarrasing. What I expected was a positive, hopefully even very positive response, mixed in with perhaps some negative comments. Instead, even though the original post was done on a low traffic subreddit on a quiet Sunday afternoon, things got very quickly out of hand. Most of the comments I've seen were very enthusiastic, mainly expressing amazement on the fact that this was my first JavaScript project. However, I've done most of this stuff before, so not everything was entirely new. On my part, I just think that Bruno Škvorc explained it best with a comment on Google+:

''This is JS perfection right there, shows how much of an advantage low level programmers coming from

desktop environments actually have when adopting JS, simply due to the different mindset.''

I believe that we will certainly be seeing some really impressive work in the browser in the near future.

What are some of the biggest problems you are seeing with HTML5 or WebGL?

The biggest hurdle for WebGL right now (as everyone knows) is that it's not supported by Internet Explorer. Microsoft has a vested interest in keeping it that way of course, but I don't think they can continue doing that for long.

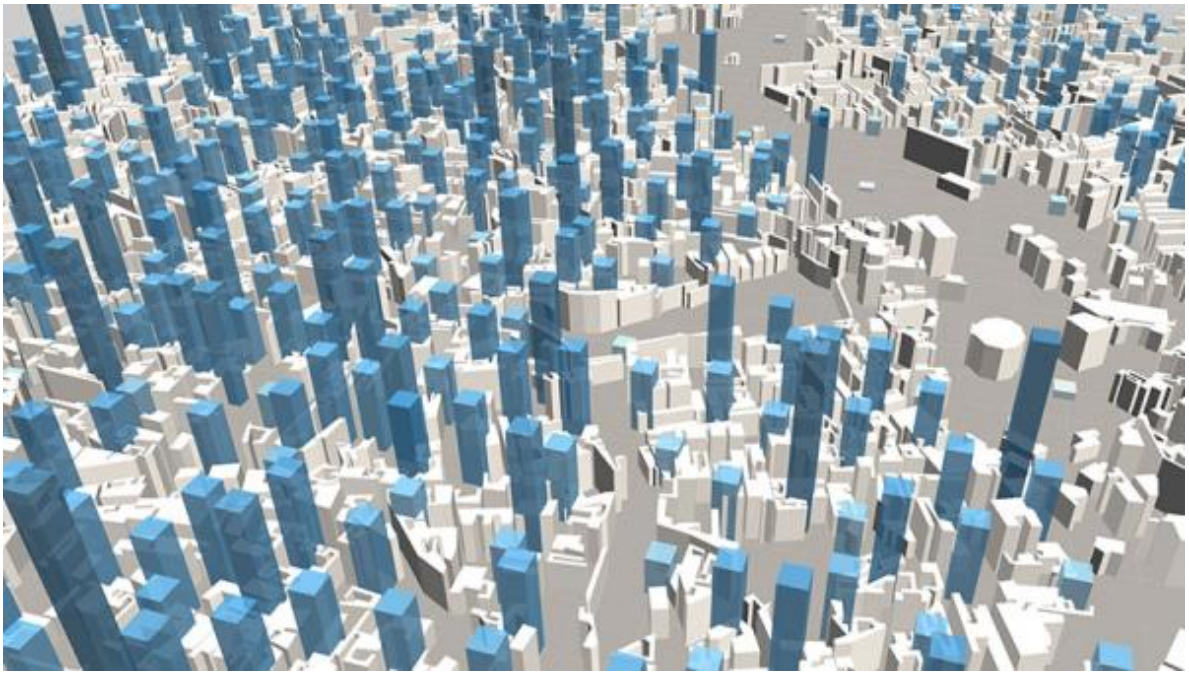
Do you have other projects planned using WebGL or web-based 3D?

Oh, yes!

ViziCities behind the scenes

Sun, Mar 17 2013 22:17:20 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

The creator behind ViziCities, a new web based graphical visualization tool currently in beta, posted some behind the scenes commentary on how the system works.

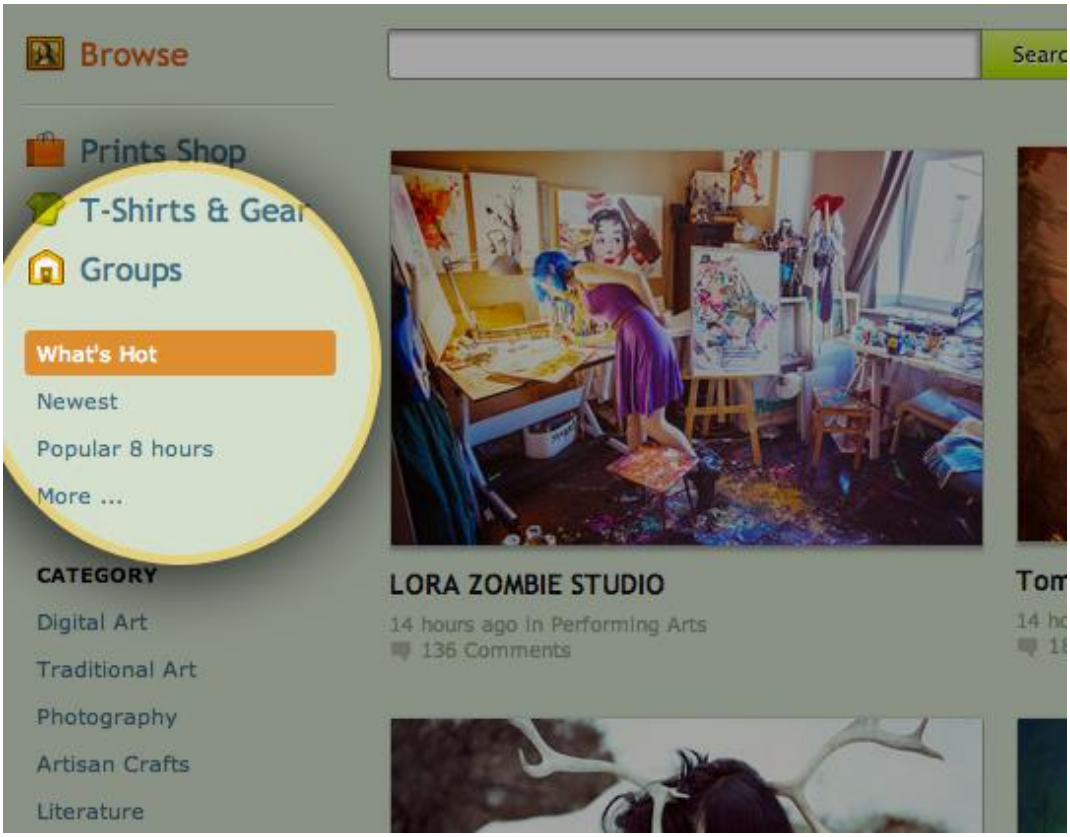


ViziCities is a web platform using WebGL which takes various sources of data and creates a 3D representation of real time cities around the world in order to display statistics in a novel manner. The project is described as a combination of art, play and science.

DeviantART introduces trending function

Sat, Mar 16 2013 3:19:11 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

DeviantART introduced a new feature on the popular gallery site called *What's Hot*.



This new feature is present on the side of any page as you browse the various galleries. The goal of this feature is to help trending artworks surface from the thousands of pieces submitted every day. While DA already has a *What's Popular* feature, this new one ignores submission dates and uses an algorithm to find out all of the submissions that are currently trendy. This option is currently in beta and still being tweaked.

Announcing TideArt Exchange

Fri, Mar 15 2013 7:55:39 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

TideArt is proud to announce a brand new service for artists called **TideArt Exchange**! This is a new service that aims at pairing artists and businesses or freelancers together who may be looking for graphics work to be done. You can read the full press release.

Commissions have traditionally been lengthy and costly for writers, bloggers or business professionals to acquire. But **TideArt Exchange** now provides an easy solution by pairing artists and clients in a quick and inexpensive way thanks to a flat rate along with a large network of graphics designers and artists.

If you'd like to register for a free account, or fill a work order, click on the link on the right side.

Interview with Shana

Thu, Mar 14 2013 19:20:55 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Shana, a popular Poser clothing and texture 3D vendor over at Renderosity.

Could you briefly describe yourself?

Well, what can I say about myself? Let's see, I live in Portugal, I work as a freelance graphic designer/ artist, although my main focus at the moment is Poser-related. In my free-time (when I get some), I love to read. I have a huge book collection, although I hardly pick up an actual book anymore, it's more iPad and Kindle these days, lol. I also enjoy watching a good movie. I'll watch almost anything, just not drama, there's already plenty of that in real life, but as long as it's a romantic comedy, action, adventure, mystery or musical, count me in! Other than that, what more can I say? I really like playing on my xbox and ps3, I love to shop, but doesn't every girl ? :D I LOVE music, I can't do anything around the house without having something playing in the background, especially when I'm working, and that's pretty much it, I wish I had something really amazing to share here, lol, but I'm just pretty much your average girl next door I guess

How did you get started making Poser textures and products?

It started about 8 years ago, maybe a little more, I remember that I had this game on my computer that that some people on an internet forum where doing renders of the game's characters and models using some sort of 3D application, 3DSmax I think. I started googling around about 3D Renders and I stumbled onto Renderosity, from there I got familiar with Poser and the enormous quantity of content a person could get for that, I eventually tried it out and it was so easy, I was instantly hooked, it was so simple to use and not that hard to get some decent results, Back then, when I was just rendering for fun, I started creating content out of necessity. When I wanted something that I couldn't find, sometimes I would end up making it myself. I was encouraged to try and start selling my own products, and so I did. I was working as a web-designer at the time and I didn't have much experience with 3D but I had been using Photoshop for the longest time, so texturing and creating texture based products seemed to be a nice way to try and see if I could have any success as a vendor, and the rest is as they say, history.

How long did it take you to get into the top sellers ranks?

I think it took me about 3 or 4 months, at first I thought I was never ever going to come close to that, but then when I got a few sales and I had a couple of successful products, I started thinking I might eventually make it to Top Vendor, like a year later or something, not 3 months after my first product. When I got an e-mail letting me know I had made it I was happily surprised, I hoped one day I would get there, I just never thought it would be that fast

Is this a full time job for you or mostly a hobby?

Back when I started I didn't think this could be become my full time job as it is now, it was more of an hobby than a job, just something I could do on the side to earn some extra income. I eventually got successful enough that it did become my full time job.

How long does it take you to create a product?

It depends on what sort of product it will be, for texture add-ons, on a simple one piece outfit, I can finish everything (Textures, Promos, Packaging) in a couple of days, if it's for a more complicated outfit, it will take me a little longer, 3 or 4 days. It really depends on what the product will require, for example, the SHOOT line I have going with outoftouch, those are much more detailed textures and promos, that takes me close to a week to have it done, when they have a character and I include python overlay options, that's at least 1 more day of texturing if not more. Then I have my new exPOSED products just with poses for V4, that can take me 1 or 2 weeks, but that's because I usually work on that when there's nothing else that needs to be finished.

Can you describe the process of making a texture add-on?

I would say the first part of the process is deciding what product to do them for, if the product is already for sale somewhere, I take into consideration how well it's selling, how long it's been for sale, what vendor is it from and on which website it is, personal taste also plays a part of course, I'm more inclined to work on something if I like the original product than I would be if it's something I don't particularly care for, or something I don't think is that well done. I take into consideration all of that, but there are always exceptions, for example I might do an add-on for something I don't like, if I think an add-on will be successful, and the other way around too, I might do an add-on for something that didn't sell that well or is already pretty old, just because I like it and I think my textures would bring something to it, as much as I like doing this, It ends up being a business so there are always things to take into consideration.

After deciding what to work on, then it's time to figure out what exactly I'm going to do, sometimes just looking at what it is I can sort of plan what to do, just because there's things I've seen before that I like and that I think I can recreate on this add-on. When you don't have a clear idea on what to do, then Google image search is your best friend, I look around for inspiration and things that I think look nice and that I can recreate with my textures, I get a few ideas together and start the hard part, the actual textures, I usually make about 7 different texture styles, that's usually about 30 textures in total (Diffuse, Bump, Transparency and Displacement maps). After that's done I start working on the promos to display

everything, that's my favorite part, creating a cool logo for the product and getting a background to match, selecting a character and the accessories for the renders, while the renders are running I package the product and get everything ready to upload, that's about it.

What tips would you give to people wanting to get started in selling Poser products?

There's so much that can be said here, but I'll focus on what I think is the most important thing. This is what worked for me when I started out, and that was to be unique and original. This is an extremely competitive business. If you don't stand out from the crowd, then no matter how talented you may be, you'll end up being just one more and getting lost in the mix. Customers should recognize your work without even having to look at your username. Just think about it, there are a lot of amazing and talented artists working daily on creating digital content for Poser. The more you develop your own style and make it recognizable, the more you increase your chances of succeeding. Other than that, the only other advice I have is what can also usually be applied to everything in life, and that is to always try and do better next time, always put quality before quantity and just do what you love and be happy

You often pair your products with other vendors, do you find that's a useful strategy?

I think so, especially with texture add-ons, it only makes sense to have the add-on released at the same time as the product it's for, or at least as close as possible. That way I think it's more likely that the customer who buys the original product might also pick up the add-on and vice versa. Sometimes the original product is a really nice model but only comes with very basic textures, so a nice texture add-on released at the same time has a good chance to also get picked up by a potential customer, so it ends up working great for both vendors, people who like the textures will have to buy the original product they are for to be able to use them, and people who like the original product, might also pick up the add-on if it's released at the same time just to get a few different looks from a different vendor.

Any new product in development right now?

I'm always working on a lot of things at once, but, since I'm mainly a texture artist, I will always be working on more texture packs. Right now, I'm working on a couple of products with outoftouch. If you follow both of us on Renderosity, you have probably seen some of what we've been doing there, we have few upcoming products we made that I'm really happy with, those are coming very very soon (or might be on sale already lol, depends on when you read this), but that's what takes most of my time at the moment. Expanding that line of products and planning our future releases for it is my priority right now.

HIERO shot reformatting video

Thu, Mar 14 2013 9:33:33 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The Foundry released a video showing how to do shot reformatting in HIERO 1.5.

Rise of the Guardians behind the scenes video

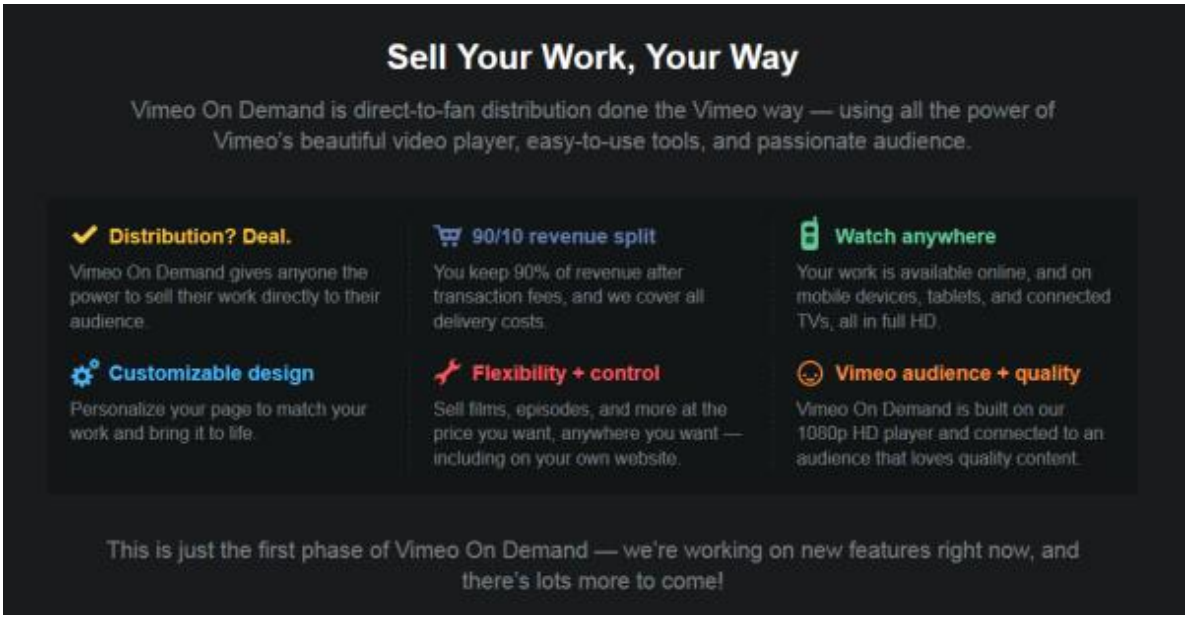
Wed, Mar 13 2013 20:42:42 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under videos

The producers of Rise of the Guardians posted a behind the scenes video showing how they create the 3D world for this game.

Vimeo On Demand

Wed, Mar 13 2013 9:37:03 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Vimeo has introduced a feature called On Demand which is a new service for content creators to offer their videos for sale or for a tip to their user base.



This service from Vimeo is touted as a way for video makers to sell their videos to fans. All that is required is for someone to sign up to their Pro service, and then they can start monetizing their content directly on that platform. This system supports both rentals and purchases, and is obviously competing with sites like Netflix and YouTube's Partner Network. The author gets to keep 90% of the sale price.

Artist showcase: alexiuss

Wed, Mar 13 2013 0:47:26 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature the art of alexiuss, a digital painter and photo-manipulation artist.

SMTART.COM
VITALY S ALEXIUS

Luxology posts MODO 701 teaser video

Tue, Mar 12 2013 21:19:19 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Luxology posted a teaser video for the upcoming MODO 701, hinting at a Linux release as well.

Some of the features that can be expected from the new release include:

* Procedural particle engine with an easy to use preset workflow.
* Audio playback and sound channel modifier.
* Schematic improvements, reducing scene graph complexity.
* Dedicated dynamics simulation layer, significantly improving performance.
* Simplified complexity of materials and layered shaders.
* Large scene performance improvements by as much as 175x.
* Preview render synchronization improvements, over 50x faster in large scenes.
* New Python interpreter making python execution many times faster.
* Unlimited network rendering.
* Soon to be released LINUX operating system support.
* AND LOTS MORE...

OctaneRender for Lightwave

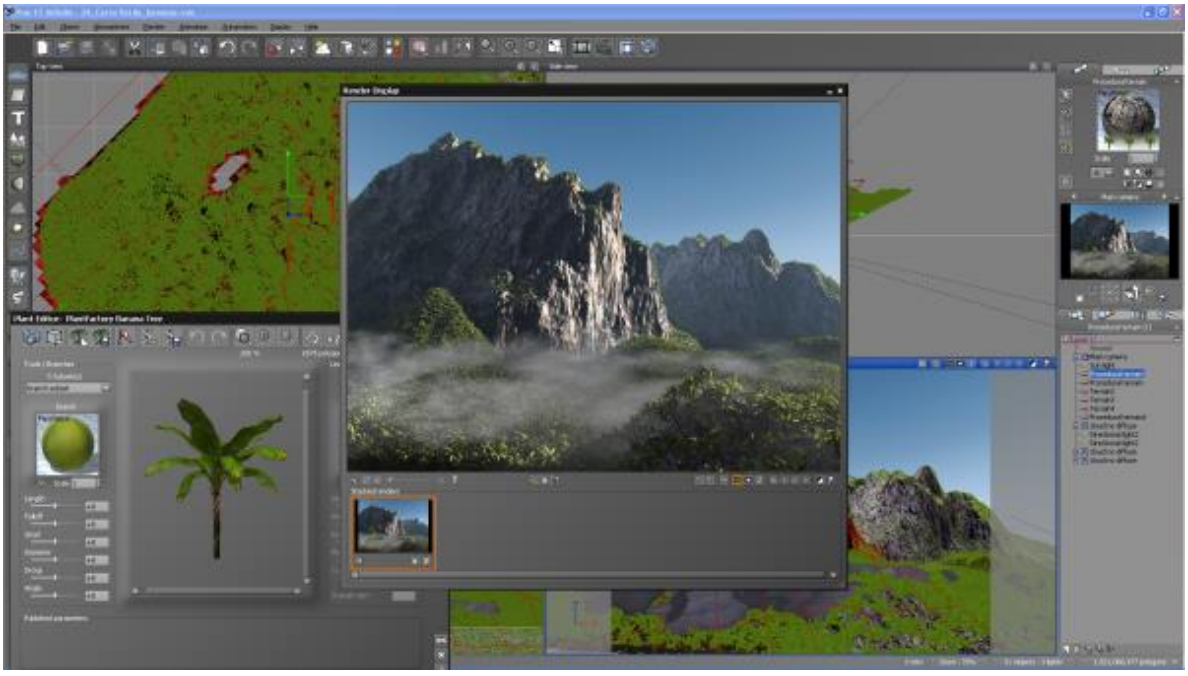
Tue, Mar 12 2013 20:28:56 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

A new introduction video was posted on Vimeo showing the latest OctaneRender for Lightwave.

The Plant Factory to be available in Vue

Tue, Mar 12 2013 10:50:46 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

A few weeks ago, E-on Software introduced their new Plant Factory technology allowing the creation of very realistic looking plants and trees. Now today they announced that this technology will be available as standalone, part of their Vue software, or in other CGI solutions as well.



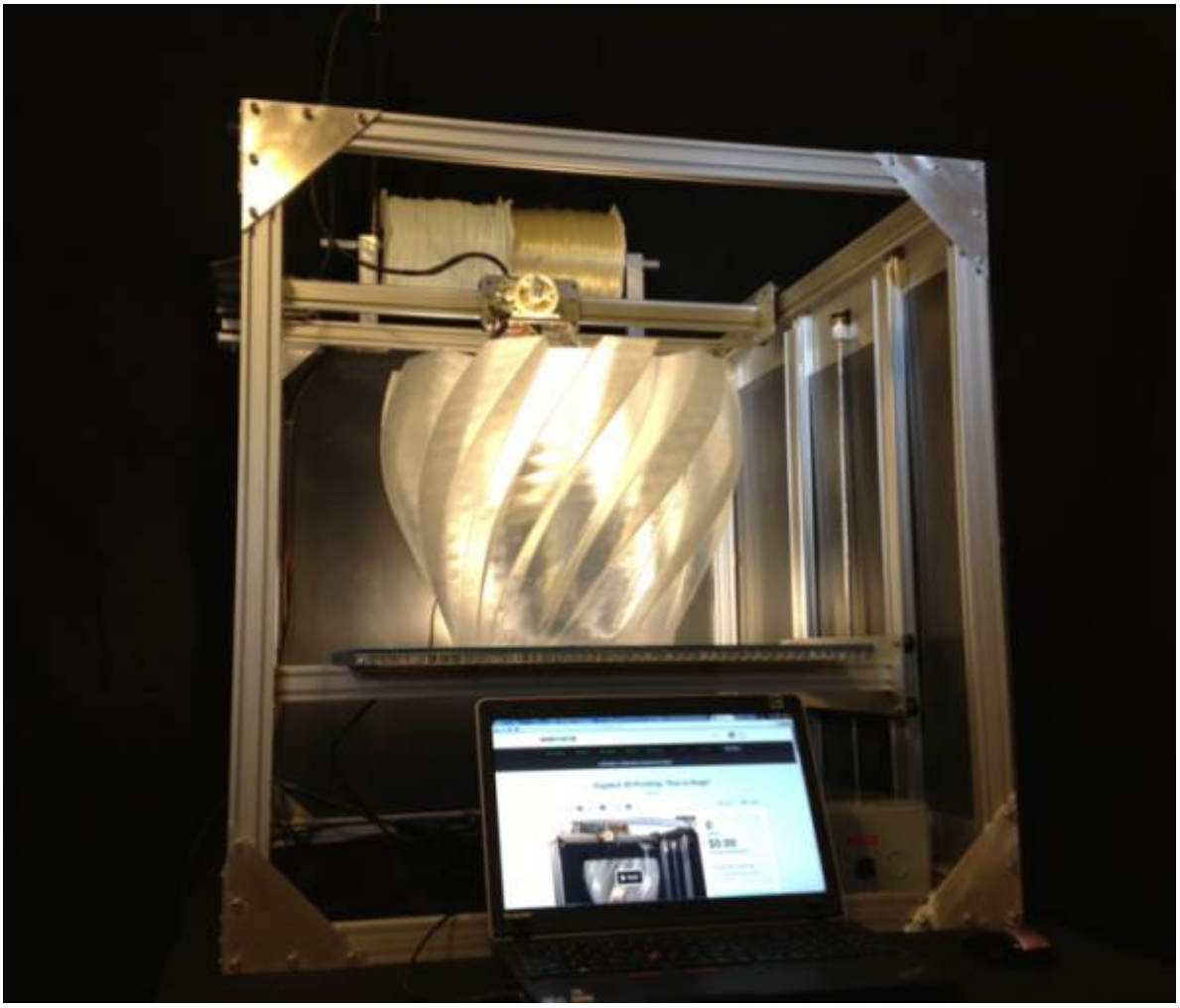
According to the description, The Plant Factory will create unique vegetation where two trees are never the same. This will allow very unique and realistic looking 3D scenes to be rendered. The resulting plants will be

editable inside of the Vue plant editor, and compatible with their Ecosystem technology. More information will be made available on March 18th.

Gigabot 3D printer

Mon, Mar 11 2013 15:07:36 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

A development team recently started a Kickstarter project called the Gigabot, which is a 3D printer that they hope to bring to the masses able to print larger 3D models than typical desktop printers found on the shelves today.



The goal of this device is to provide a full 24'' x 24'' x 24'' printing area with 100 micron layer resolution, something that used to be available only in expensive industrial printers. This could be useful for artists or designers wanting to print their 3D models in the real world. The Kickstarter has already reached its funding goal so this project is likely to happen.

Lucas to create his own art museum

Sun, Mar 10 2013 3:21:32 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

According to a report on Cartoon Brew, it appears as if George Lucas will now be spending some of his free time to open a comic, illustration and animation art museum.

He announced his big new project in a CBS interview and said that he's currently looking for a location for the new museum, eying the Presidio. The director says he wants the new museum to be a dedication to cultural fantasy, and to educate people on the idea of storytelling.

Lucas wants art to become as accessible as his own movies and says his personal collection would be part of some of the first items found in this new museum.

Why artists should care about branding

Sat, Mar 9 2013 19:36:34 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

As artists, we typically work mostly with our creative side. Many studies seem to show that our brain is divided in a fairly even way, with half of it being for creative endeavors, and the other half being analytical, for sciences and maths. Typically this means that marketers and business people will use a different skill set than artists, which can be a problem for a young creative person attempting to survive and grow through their art, making enough income to live full time. So as a result this may not be obvious to you, but branding is something that every artist should care about.

Usually when we talk about branding we're thinking about large corporations, but in reality everyone has a brand, whether it is a personal brand or a business one. If you've been selling your art for some time and have experience with marketing then you may already know this, but if you consider your creative process to be nothing more than a hobby right now, this may not be as obvious. Yet even at this stage, you should think about how you are branding yourself. Whether it's through social networks, gallery sites, your own blog, offline papers, and so on.

In simple terms, branding simply means the way you present yourself or your business to the world. Deciding whether it will be a person or a company brand is the first important step. For most content creators, marketing yourself is probably the best idea. But some artists preferred to also create a small business where they focus their branding efforts. This could be useful if you're trying to market to large corporations. For example, let's say you create 3D models. Chances are the public won't be interested in actual meshes, but companies might. So to make it easier to deal with them, you might approach them under the name of your own creative agency instead of a single person. This is a choice everyone has to make.

As for the branding itself, it really isn't that hard to figure out. First, consistency is a huge part of branding. Right from the start, decide how you will present yourself in writing. Do you use your full name, a nickname, a business name? Think about creating a logo for yourself. If you draw or paint, that part is pretty easy. Use a consistent font for your signatures. Decide on an avatar picture that represents you. Finally, find a set of colors that match and that you like. Whether it's to use on your web site, your logo, business card, or whatever else that identifies you, by having a consistent look and feel, you ensure people will remember you.

It's easy to see the power of branding when looking at large brand names. Everyone around the world recognizes the Coca Cola logo simply by seeing a glimpse of it. This is one of the biggest brands out there. The same is true for many popular logos or company names. The soft drink company spends millions just to make sure all of their products use the right shade of red, because they know how important it is. Of course you won't become as popular as Coke overnight, but consistent branding means you are easier to find online and offline, and when you decide to sell your art or your services, it will be that much easier to do so.

Pixar talks about math in movies

Sat, Mar 9 2013 1:44:17 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Tony DeRose, senior scientist at Pixar, spoke recently with a group of visitors at the New York Museum of Mathematics. He explained how important maths were for designers, graphics artists and game developers. His lecture was titled Math in the Movies.

Speaking to an eager crowd, Tony said that future animators and game designers should be studying their calculus and algebra. He said that hair, clothes, fluids and light all have their own physics, and that being able to calculate and predict the maths behind these concepts will help any artist trying to create 3D animations.

He finished by talking about some of the great open source solutions out there that can help students such as Blender 3D and Pixar's own subdivision code library which the company released as open source last year.

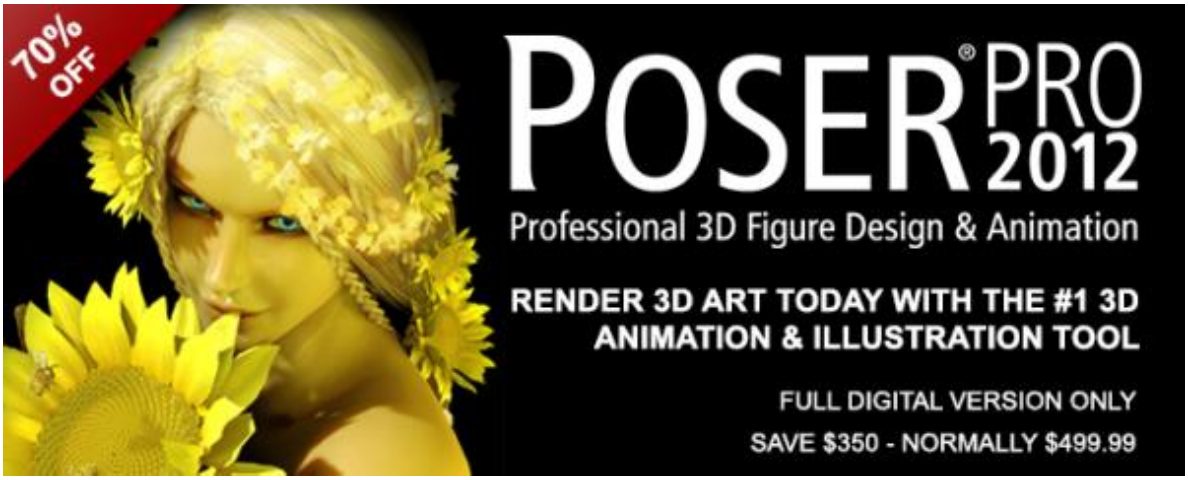
Mudbox 2014 sneak peek

Fri, Mar 8 2013 3:59:46 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Autodesk released yet another preview video, this time of Mudbox 2014. The sneak peek shows some of the features coming in the next version of the software.

Smith Micro offers Poser sale

Fri, Mar 8 2013 1:11:36 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news



In a move aimed at bringing 3D art to more people, Smith Micro, the company behind the popular Poser software, is offering Poser Pro 2012 at an unprecedented 70% off at $149 for the next two weeks.

Poser 9 is also on sale at $65 and provides enough features to start doing 3D artworks. It comes with 3D human figures, hair, clothing, props, scenery, lighting and camera effects.

Autodesk Maya 2014 sneak peek

Thu, Mar 7 2013 3:33:50 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Autodesk released yet another sneak peek video of their 2014 products, this time showing Maya modeling.

Dove action call Photoshop video

Wed, Mar 6 2013 23:14:13 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Dove posted a video showcasing a recent marketing campaign where they posted a Photoshop plugin on various forums in the hope that marketing agencies would use it, but it was in fact a disguised action call.

Blender 2.66a released

Wed, Mar 6 2013 19:54:40 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Blender has released version 2.66a which is mostly a bug fix version. New files can be downloaded from their web site.

The new version includes over 50 fixes on the interface, viewport, animation, sequencer, composite nodes, tracking, render, modifier, tools, sculpt, game engine, text editor, python and more.

Adobe Summit 2013

Wed, Mar 6 2013 17:26:34 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Adobe is holding its Digital Summit 2013 this week at which various industry speakers will be talking about many new technologies and practices useful for designers and online marketers.

Among the subjects covered we find new touch interfaces that productivity software provide, mobile marketing opportunities, Adobe Social going mobile, how to deliver a consistent experience between desktop and mobile, and new advertising solutions from the company.

Live keynotes are available on the web site for those who cannot attend in person.

Artist showcase: Aphrodite

Tue, Mar 5 2013 23:21:58 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're very glad to feature the art of Aphrodite who creates great 3D renders.

www.aphrodite-ns.deviantart.com

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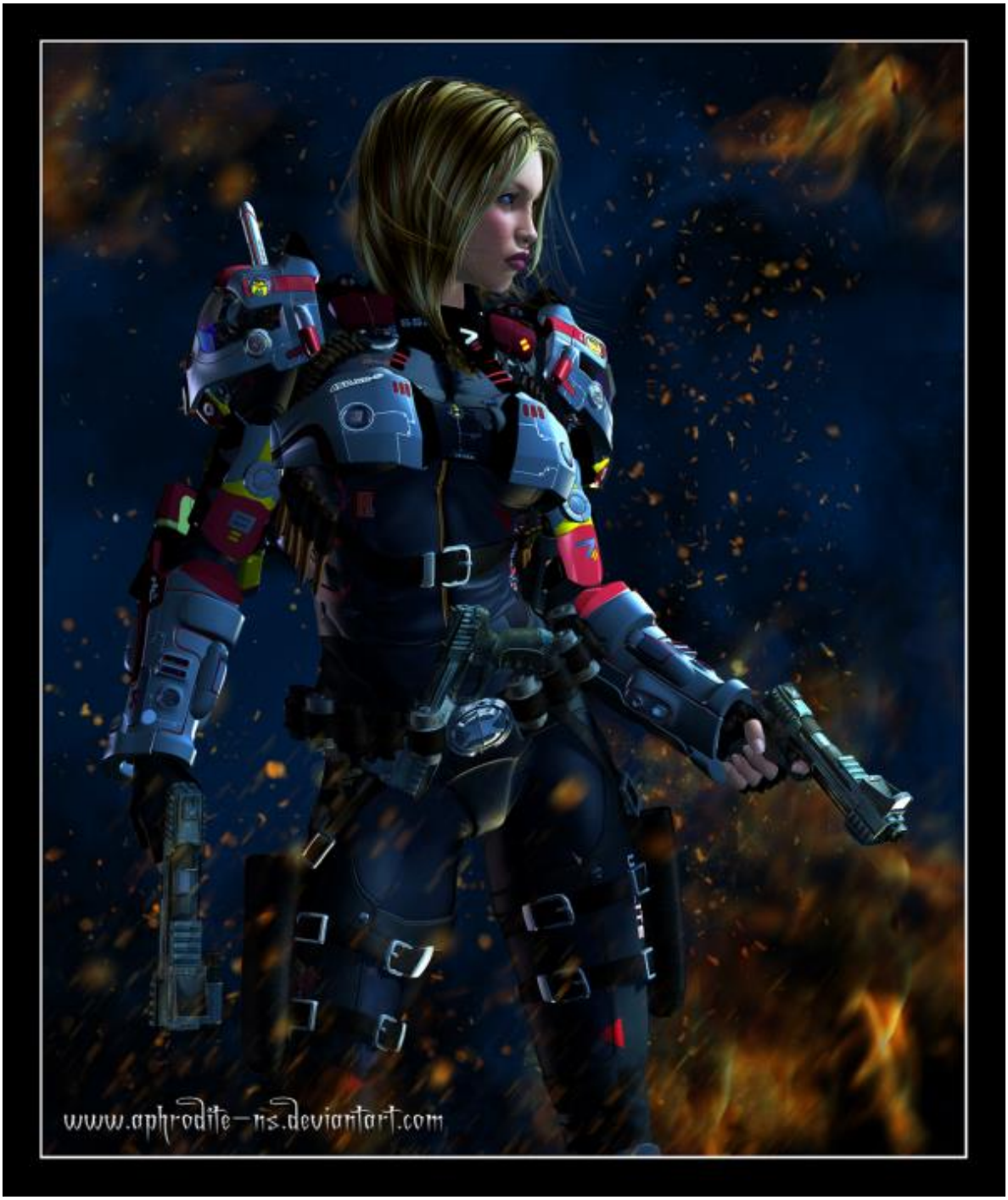
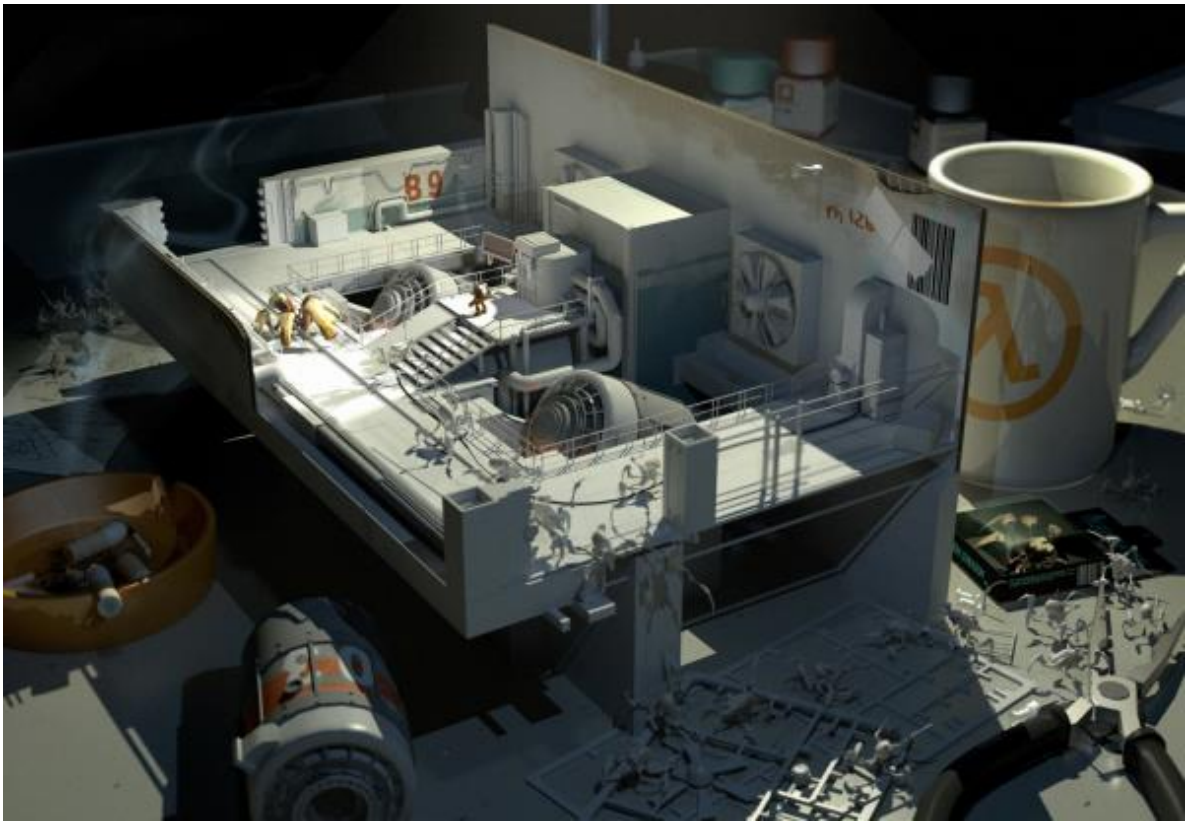

www.aphrodite-ns.deviantart.com

Valve concept art

Tue, Mar 5 2013 11:28:20 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Valve has posted a new page on their community site featuring concept art from their in-house artists. The site contains a few dozens images already and will presumably be where future concept art will be posted by company artists.



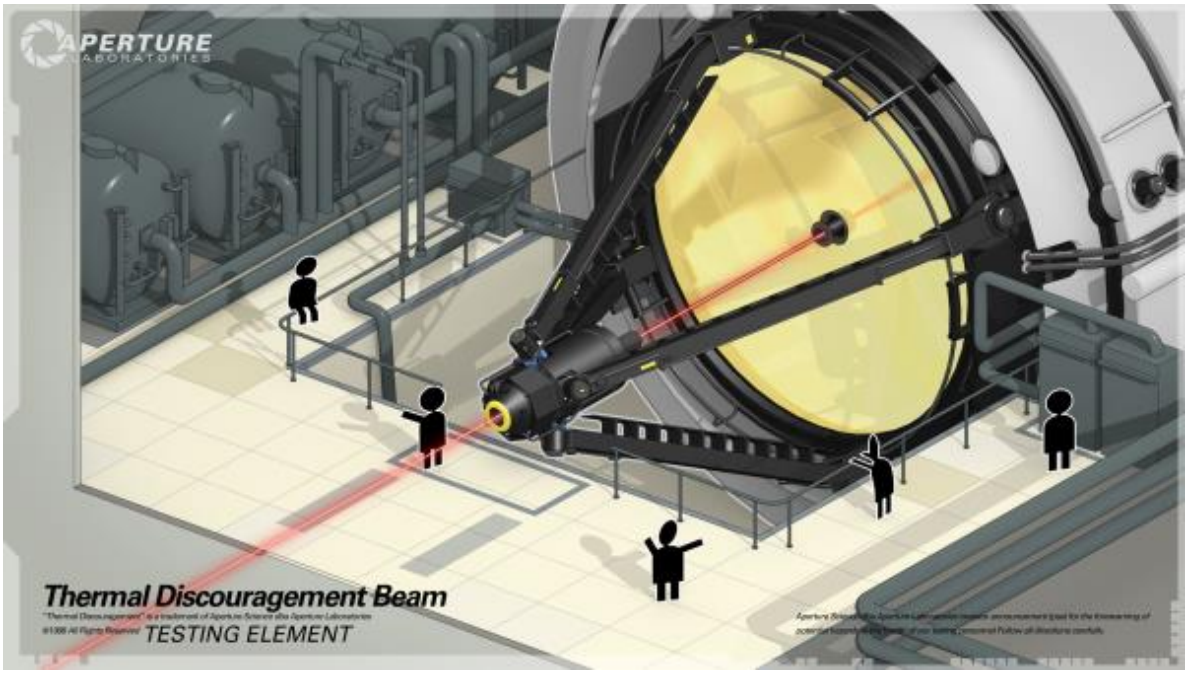
BASE MAP

PAINT OVER/CONCEPT

FINAL IN GAME SCREENSHOT

RPG
SOLDIER

MEDIC



Autodesk 3DS MAX Populate 2014 sneak peak

Tue, Mar 5 2013 4:30:35 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Autodesk released yet another video showing a sneak peak of 3DS MAX 2014. In this one, the populate feature is shown.

Adobe 2013 scholarships

Mon, Mar 4 2013 18:53:54 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Adobe has announced its 2013 scholarship program as part of its Adobe Youth Voices initiative, currently

open for submissions from interested students.

These scholarships are aimed at those who wish to pursue a creative career and are currently in the last year of high school or secondary school education. Those selected to receive a scholarship will have a full four year education paid by Adobe. The deadline to submit your application is March 31st.

Blender source code will move to GIT

Mon, Mar 4 2013 7:20:56 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under news

According to the latest developer meeting notes published by the Blender developers, it seems like this popular 3D modeling software will start working on a transition from SVN to the popular GIT source code control protocol.

GIT is something used by many developers and contributors of open source projects, and this move will allow Blender users to contribute to the project in a much easier way. However the team will have some hurdles to surpass before this move can be done. The first step will be to create a migration design and plan along with a way to support older systems.

3D printing video report

Sat, Mar 2 2013 9:58:08 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this PBS report, 3D printing and the future of this technology is explored along with the new uses.

Autodesk 2014 sneak peak videos

Sat, Mar 2 2013 8:24:04 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Autodesk released a series of sneak peak videos for their 2014 products which they will unveil later this month.

Wacom working on mobile tablet

Fri, Mar 1 2013 18:48:03 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Wacom posted an interesting update on their Facebook page saying that they are now working on a tablet with touch capabilities for this summer.

The post read:

We've heard you shouting out loud for a Wacom mobile tablet for creative uses. Well… we're listening. We've read your email and spoken to many about an on-the-go dream device. It will come. This summer. We're working 24/7 on it. And yes, it has a real pressure-sensitive professional pen, smooth multi-touch, an HD display, and other valuable features that you haven't seen in other tablets.

VoxelFarm Engine video

Thu, Feb 28 2013 21:00:32 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under videos

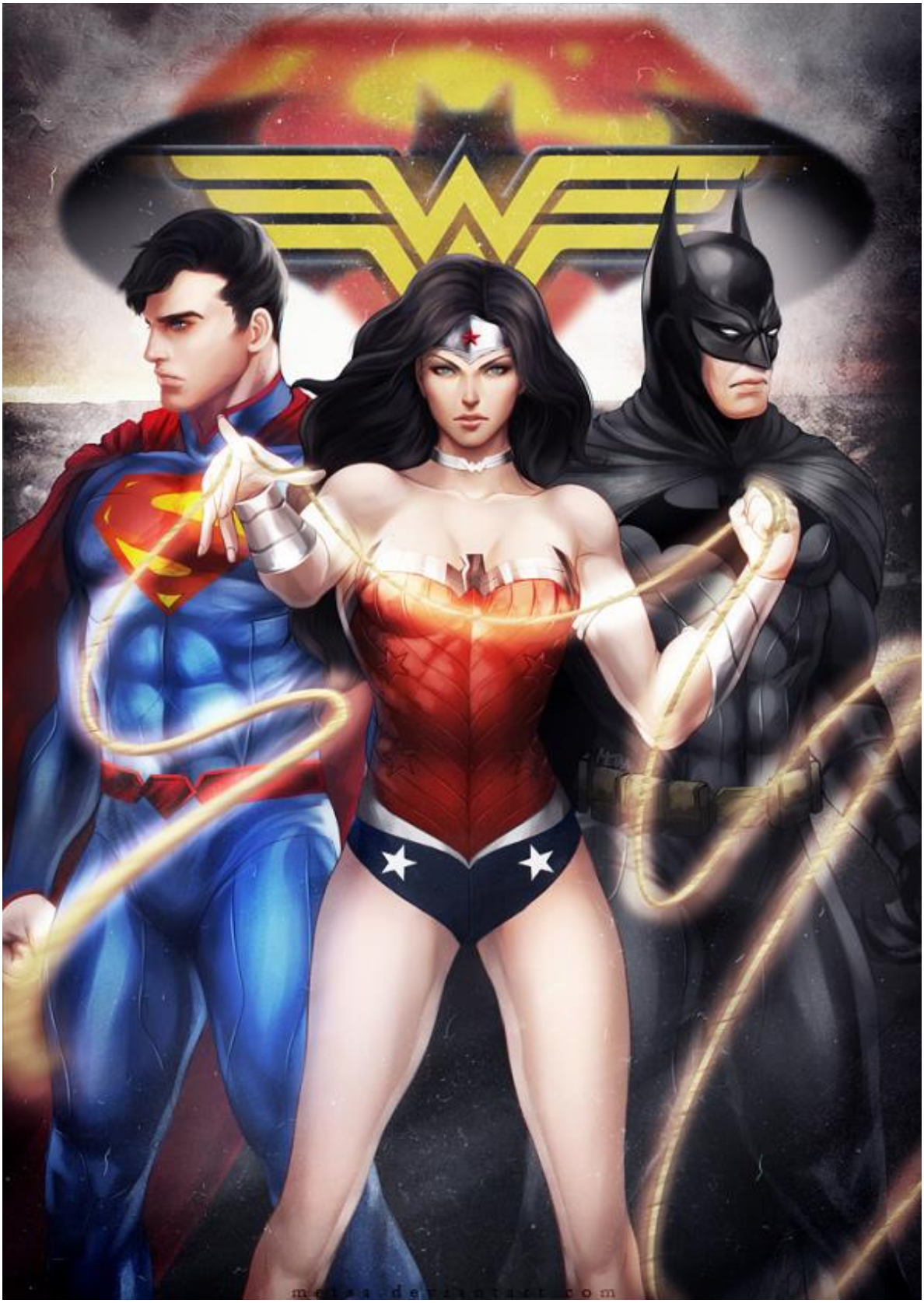
This video shows the latest improvements to VoxelFarm, a procedural engine for virtual worlds.

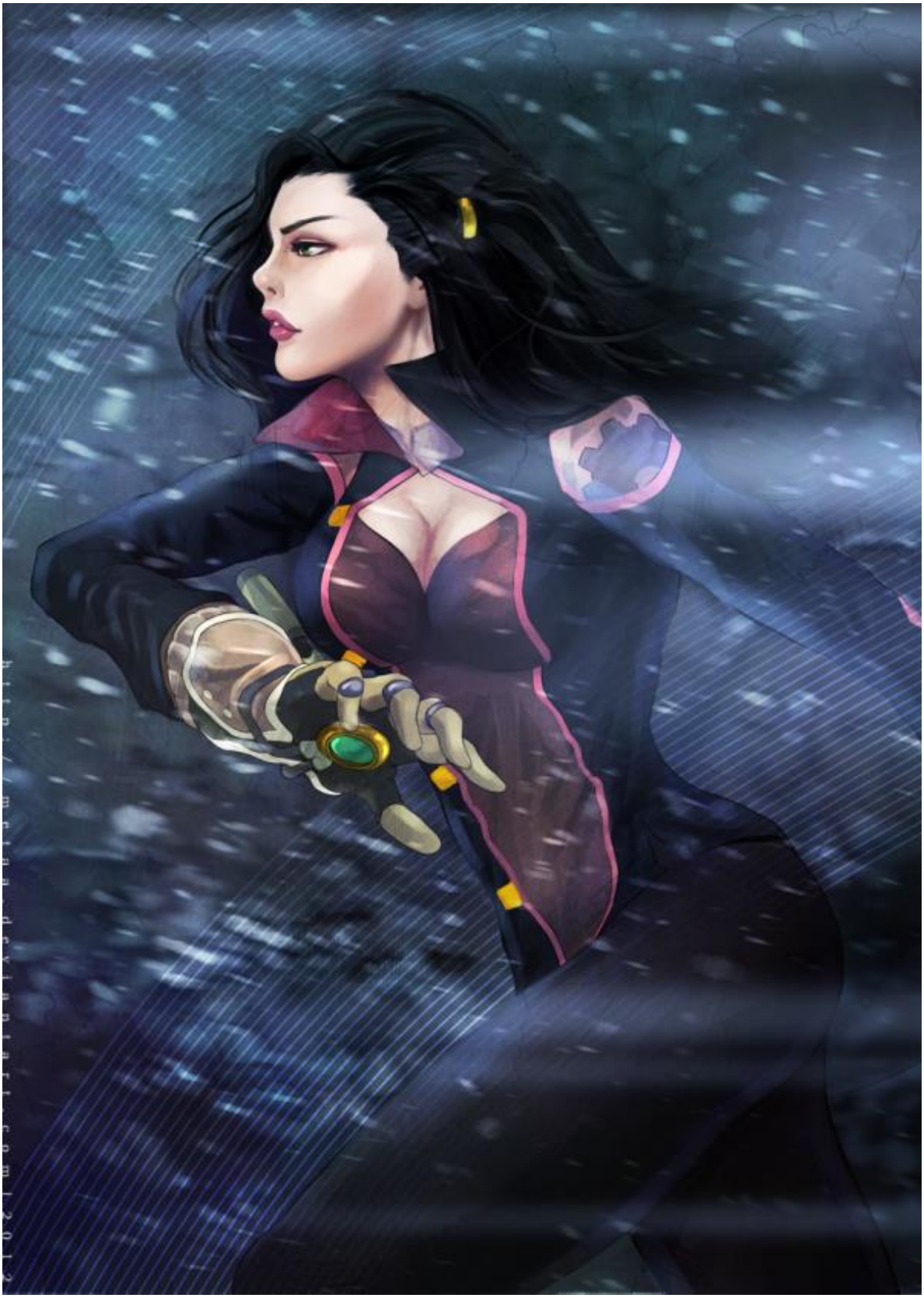
Artist showcase: Meder Taabaldiev

Thu, Feb 28 2013 8:02:55 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature the art of Meder Taabaldiev, a digital artist and hobbyist.

MEIAA
meiaa.deviantart.com | 2013




http://mstaa.deviantart.com/ 2012

LightWave 11.5 trial available

Wed, Feb 27 2013 22:11:25 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

After releasing LightWave 11.5 a few weeks ago, NewTek today has released the trial version. Anyone interested in the latest release of this 3D modeler can download it from their web site.

In order to get access to the 30 day trial, you will need to register for an account first. LightWave 11.5 has several new features over the previous version:

* Dongle-Free Licensing - Dongles are no longer required to access the many features of LightWave
* Bullet Soft Body Dynamics - Soft body effects are now possible with Bullet, including cloth
* Bullet Forces - Several force types are now available within Bullet
* Genoma - Fast, modular instant rigging system for Modeler that includes presets for rapid-rigging
* VPR Update - Depth-of-Field, Motion Blur and Anaglyph Stereo now visible in the renderer
* Rolling Shutter - Rolling Shutter camera effects are now possible to aid matching footage that has this effect present
* Edge Rendering Node Control - Control edge opacity, taper and color using nodes
* Flocking Update - Predator / Prey behavior, new Director types and Node control
* FiberFX Update - Multiple styles per object - stored with the object, new styling controls, updated UI
* GoZ Fiber Mesh Support - Building on the robust GoZ support in LightWave 11. LightWave 11.5 now supports ZBrush Fiber Meshes
* Adobe After Effects Support - 'GoZ style' After Effects interchange for Cameras, Lights, NULLs and animation
* Instancing Update - Per Object control, speed and memory improvements
* Modeler Tools Update - ABF UV Unwrap, Edit Edges, Place Mesh, Slice, Thicken, Heat Shrink, Tweak, Transform, Axis and alignment tools and more
* Workflow Enhancements - Many enhancements to streamline and improve workflow

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Art thieves: What to do about them

Wed, Feb 27 2013 20:43:46 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

For as long as there has been valuable goods, there has also been thieves trying to take advantage of them and get a quick profit. To this day we still see criminals attempt to steal traditional artworks like paintings in galleries or ancient artifacts in a museum. That's why security is always high in these places, since a single classical portrait may be worth millions of dollars. But when it comes to digital art, the situation is a lot more controversial.

With bits, there is no master portrait, everything can be copied to perfection. If you publish an image on the web, then anybody can right click on it, save it to their computer, and republish it elsewhere. Many people do just that, some in order to profit from the work of the original artists, but others do not even realize that what they are doing is wrong. A lot of people are just fans and they upload material simply for fun. Tumblr makes it trivial to do so with a *reblog* feature on every post, and social networks like Facebook cultivates a tradition of sharing with their *Share* buttons.

Of course for many content creators this is a frustrating outcome. Making a piece of digital art can be as demanding as a traditional painting, but then it takes just a second for their result to be duplicated by others. This is why copyright law exists, and technically these regulations are supposed to protect the creator of any creative work. In the US and many other countries, anyone who creates something new automatically has copy rights over it, which means nobody else can copy their work for almost any reason without the prior consent of the author. The only exception is fair use which applies for very specific purposes like news reporting or comedy.

Methods of prevention

Over the years content creators have attempted many ways to prevent others from copying digital works. There is digital rights management (DRM), which uses encryption in order to try and protect content. For the most part it doesn't work, because if you want people to be able to enjoy your content, then they have to get full access. And as soon as these bits are on their computers, there is always a way around DRM. In the case of videos there are somewhat effective methods by wrapping them inside of a Flash container for example, but even then there are programs that try to get around that, and if all else fails, someone can always stick a camera or capture card at their screen and record it again.

For images it's even harder because they are so small and easy to copy. Some sites try to use JavaScript to prevent people from right clicking images and saving them but that's a very silly solution, since anybody can simply press *Print Screen* to copy it that way, or disable JavaScript. The point remains that these types of prevention methods do not work and there will always be a way around them, since bits are by their very nature infinitely copyable.

So instead what most artists have resorted to doing is using watermarks. If you add text on top of your image that clearly states who the author is, then that will be much harder to remove. It won't prevent people from sharing your work but at least it will be clear that they are doing so illegally. A small signature at the bottom is often enough, although some thieves will actually crop the image to remove the signature, while most fans who share without thinking about it will not. Some artists use full screen watermarks in order for them not to be easily removable.

Of course if you do professional artworks you may need to provide images without watermarks at some point, which in turn means those can end up on torrent sites. The bottom line is that most successful anti-piracy campaigns are those that are balanced. The goal should be to stop 90% of illegal sharing. This can be accomplished with a watermark and a copyright notice. There will always be those enterprising enough to go around your prevention methods, but if you try to stop them, you start being so aggressive that your regular fans get inconvenienced by it. Plus those methods are unlikely to stop career criminals anyways.

Going after the thieves

The US has something called the DMCA which was created to handle just this type of event. Using a DMCA notice, you can send a specific letter to someone you suspect is using your work without your authorization. But the key is knowing who to send that notice to. Often, it's pointless to go after individuals who share your work for no monetary gain. The recording industry tried to sue individuals who shared music, and all it got them was bad publicity. You will be the one losing sleep over it, not people on Facebook or Tumblr clicking the share button a hundred times a day.

Instead, it's best to focus on the big fish. There are sites out there that are constantly brought up to make money on the back of others. These are often wallpaper sites, or image apps, which appear over night and have hundreds if not thousands of stolen images that they then try to sell. These are the criminals who try to get rich using your work and which should be stopped. If the site has a link for copyright notices, then send your complaint there, but the best way to shut them down is to find out who provides them hosting.

If they are hosted on a free service then send your DMCA notice to that service. For example a site that ends with *blogspot.com* is hosted by Google, while *wordpress.com* is hosted by WordPress. If they have their own domain name, use a WHOIS tool to find out who the registrar is for their domain name. There, you will find the contact information for the domain, and that should give you an email address to contact.

In the end, chasing thieves can be a long and stressful process. The best way to approach it is to do enough prevention that will discourage most thieves out there, and then go after the big guys. While even an individual sharing your image on Facebook is technically going against copyright laws, the trouble of chasing all of these down, especially if they aren't getting any financial gain, is going to take you far too long to make it worth it.

Many artists have taken an attitude where they see this type of casual sharing as a way to get marketing. As long as you have a clear signature on your work which leads back to your web site, then people who see this shared content may become new fans. There's a whole movement behind offering reusable content called Creative Commons which offers licenses that allow this type of sharing to be done, under various conditions. And this doesn't mean you have to start starving as an artist. A good example is Psy, creator of *Gangnam Style*, a music video that went viral. Even though he is Korean, producing music that typically has almost no chance of becoming a worldwide success, he purposely allowed anyone to reuse his video to do mashups, remakes and derivatives, which brought him a lot of traffic, and he made millions from this free YouTube video. So there are always innovative ways around the problem of art thieves.

Photoshop Touch phone version released

Wed, Feb 27 2013 18:11:12 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Today Adobe announced that Photoshop Touch is now available for iPhone and Android phones. Following their tablet release, the app is now tailored to the smaller phone screen but still contains all of the power of Photoshop under the hood including layers, masks, filters and so on.

This adds to the company's line-up after Photoshop Express which was already available for these phones. Photoshop Touch is available starting at $4.99 on the AppStore and Google Play Store.

Autodesk Unfold event

Wed, Feb 27 2013 0:36:48 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Autodesk announced its Unfold event for March 26 and 27, when they will be unveiling their 2014 product lineup.

The event will be happening live in Montreal and streamed online. Experts from the company will announce some of the new updates coming into Autodesk products and answer industry questions. On March 26 we will see Mudbox, Softimage and Motionbuilder, while on March 27 we will see 3DS MAX and Maya. Some of the panels will include subjects such as *The Evolution of the 3D industry: Who will survive?* and *2014 Workflow Demonstrations*

Mega Fiers Unity video

Tue, Feb 26 2013 2:20:05 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under videos

This video shows new features of a deformations and morphing utility for the Unity engine.

Protests at the Oscars

Mon, Feb 25 2013 19:26:49 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

While the Oscars were followed on TV by millions, a less visible protest was also happening at the same time from various VFX artists and industry professionals trying to raise awareness to the poor working conditions and unfair competitive pressures that they are under.

Almost 500 artists marched on Hollywood Blvd after the company which made Oscars winning film *Life of Pi* went bankrupt just a day after being nominated. Recently a group of workers filed a class action suit against the company who made the movie, Rhythm & Hues, contending that the studio fired 250 people without a 60 days notice.

VFX supervisor Scott Squires on the scene of the protests said that it was an effort to raise awareness. Supporting events were also being reported to be happening in Canada, New Zealand and New York. Meanwhile it's making a lot of noise online, including with an open letter being posted on Facebook to Ang Lee.

Update: Jeffrey A. Okun, the chair of VES, posted a public reply to the protests.

LuxRender 1.2 released

Mon, Feb 25 2013 0:12:22 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The developers behind the open source 3D rendering engine LuxRender have announced that version 1.2 is now available.

LuxRender is an unbiased rendering software released for free under an open source license. It supports various 3D programs including Blender, 3DS MAX and XSI. Users can download the last version from their download page.

This new release provides many new features, including new hybrid rendering modes, SLG bidirectional implementations, more advanced GPU memory management, improved queue handling, a much faster bloom filter and many other fixes.

Artrage 4 now available

Sun, Feb 24 2013 12:15:29 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Painting software Artrage 4 has been released this week, bringing a series of new features and an improved workflow to artists.

Artrage is a popular digital drawing tool, and version 4 is now available on the company's web site for purchase.

Some of the new and improved features in this release include:
* Paint Symmetry
* Scraps & Views
* Workbench Mode
* Toolbox Panel
* Gradient Fills
* Wacom Stylus Features
* Clone Tool
* Non-Uniform Transformations

Metro VFX video

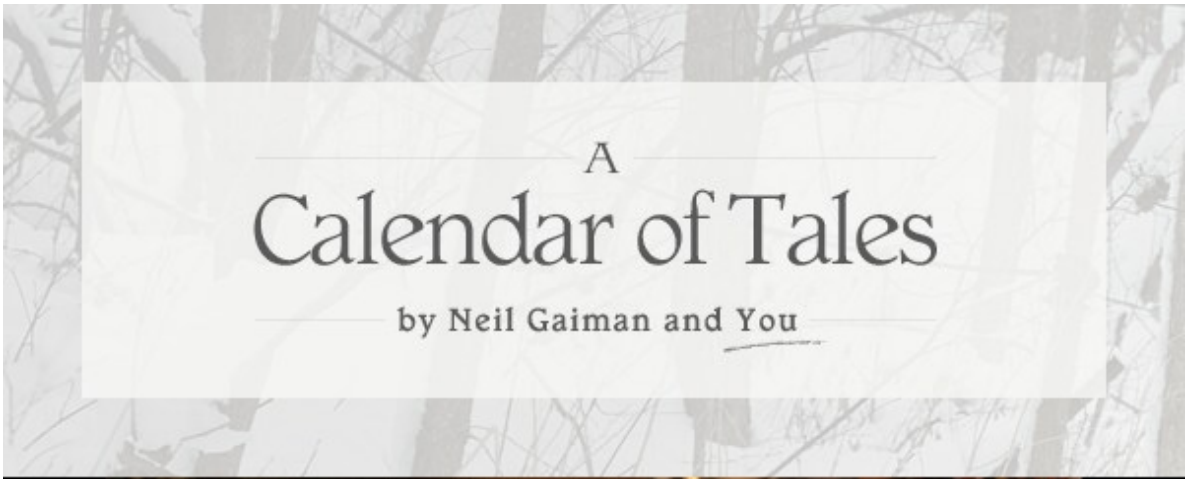
Sat, Feb 23 2013 10:31:30 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

This video shows the VFX work that went into the new movie Metro (2013).

Neil Gaiman art contest

Fri, Feb 22 2013 22:47:21 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Neil Gaiman, DeviantART and Blackberry are sponsoring a two week contest where any artist is invited to submit an entry that represents one of Gaiman's recent stories.



Neil Gaiman wrote 12 stories in 12 months, and now artists have until March 11th to participate and enter images to be part of a Calendar of Tales, an ebook created by the author. 12 winners will be selected after the deadline passes.

Marvelous Designer 2 video

Fri, Feb 22 2013 20:35:16 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

This video shows the creation of 3D clothes possible inside of Marvelous Designer 2.

Artist showcase: Vashperado

Fri, Feb 22 2013 6:30:05 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're happy to feature the art of Mike Nesbitt, also known as Vashperado.

#350
vashperado.deviantart.com

MAYA
AS
"THE UNDERTAKER"
J.D.
AS
"RAVEN"
MONA
AS
"C.M. PUNK"

VASHPERADO.DEVIANTART.COM #261

#355

Blender 2.66 released

Thu, Feb 21 2013 19:39:21 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The Blender Foundation has released the final 2.66 release of this popular open source 3D modeling software, now available for all to download.

Some of the new or improved features include:

* Dynamic Topology Sculpting
* Rigid Body Simulation
* UI and Usability improved
* Cycles Render
* Mesh Modeling for the Bevel tool
* Image Transparency refactored
* New Mesh Cache modifier
* New options for the Game Engine
* A new SPH particle fluid solver
* Collada import and export improved

Photoshop.com service migrating

Thu, Feb 21 2013 18:50:48 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Adobe announced the end of their Photoshop.com photo storage service and the move to their new Adobe Revel platform.

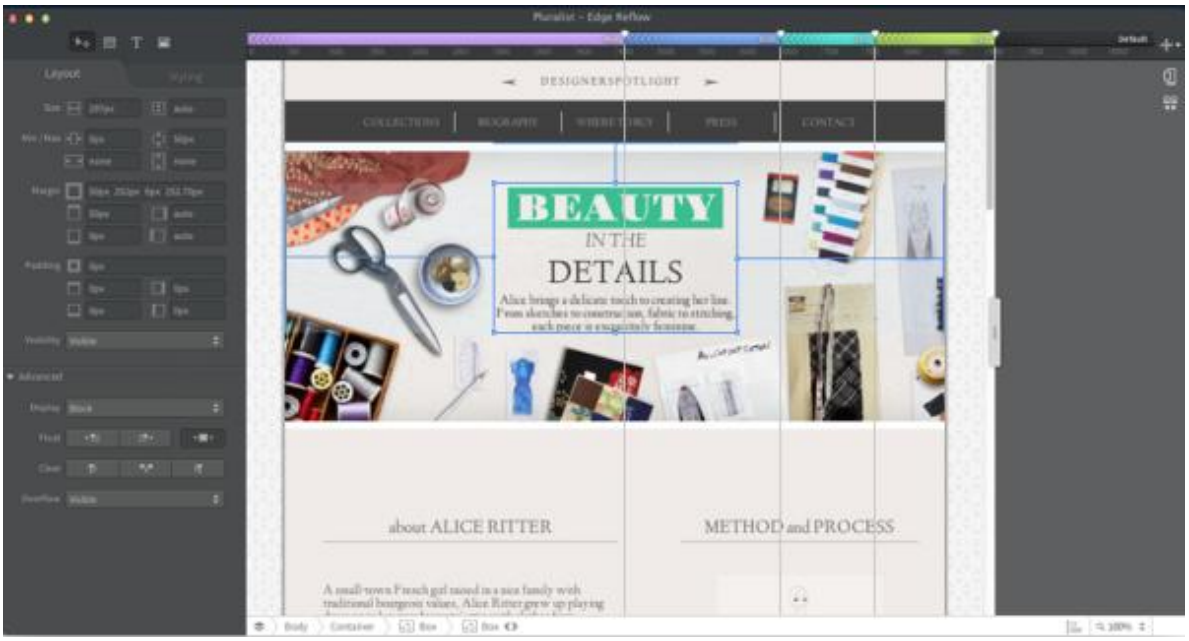
Adobe® Revel™

According to their FAQ page, the current service will end on June 12th and all current images on the Photoshop.com page will be migrated to Adobe Revel. Not all file types are supported however, so users are urged to backup their photos before then.

Adobe Edge Reflow Preview Release

Thu, Feb 21 2013 2:18:44 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Adobe announced this week the first Preview Release of Edge Reflow, their HTML5 development tool for web designers. The tool is offered for free to Creative Cloud members.



After being in early beta for the past year, this preview release is still in testing and is now being offered to

Creative Cloud subscribers. According to the site, Edge Reflow allows you to create responsive layouts using an intuitive user interface, design simultaneously for different screen sizes using a visual workspace, and generate high fidelity styles through CSS using the native web surface. Designers can also quickly get results using the intuitive controls in the interface. Designs can then be explored on different devices in real-time using the Edge Inspect extension, or you can extract CSS files for development in Edge Code, Dreamweaver or another code editor.

EXPOSÉ 11 call for entries

Wed, Feb 20 2013 23:06:17 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Ballistic Publishing has opened calls for submissions until March 28th for the upcoming EXPOSÉ 11 release.

Each year, EXPOSÉ publishes the artwork from some of the most innovative artists around. This art book is renowned and sells to top Game and Film studios. The call for entries has been opened up for the next issue, EXPOSÉ 11, and any interested artist can submit their work on the official web site. The submissions will be judged by a group of industry leaders and artists.

Maxwell Render for ArchiCAD and Revit

Wed, Feb 20 2013 20:00:23 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Maxwell Render is a popular plugin for 3D artists to produce better rendered images using its wide range of features, regardless of the modeling software they use. Now, the company announced two new versions, Maxwell Render for ArchiCAD and for Revit.

Maxwell Render for ArchiCAD is available now and provides the following features:

* Complex scene export from ArchiCAD to Maxwell
* Maxwell Render panel to adjust Maxwell specific parameters
* Maxwell Physical Sky, IBL environment, sun and all the other Maxwell Sky parameters inside ArchiCAD
* Automatic and semi-automatic material conversion
* Maxwell MXM materials inside ArchiCAD (as referenced materials)
* Maxwell material preview inside the Material Settings dialog
* Maxwell Grass
* Maxwell FIRE (Maxwell Interactive Renderer within ArchiCAD)
* Supports referencing external MXS files containing geometry and materials
* Automatic animation export from ArchiCAD (Sun Study... and Fly -Through...)

Maxwell also announced its Revit plugin with the following features:

* Compatibility: Revit 2012 and 2013 (any edition)
* Support for Revit lights, including IES
* Support for many built-in Revit materials
* Ability to override scene materials with MXM files
* Maxwell Grass
* Multilight read back: changes made to lights in Multilight can be imported back into the Revit scene
* Easy access to the Maxwell material library and gallery from inside the Revit UI

Digital NYC in The Avengers

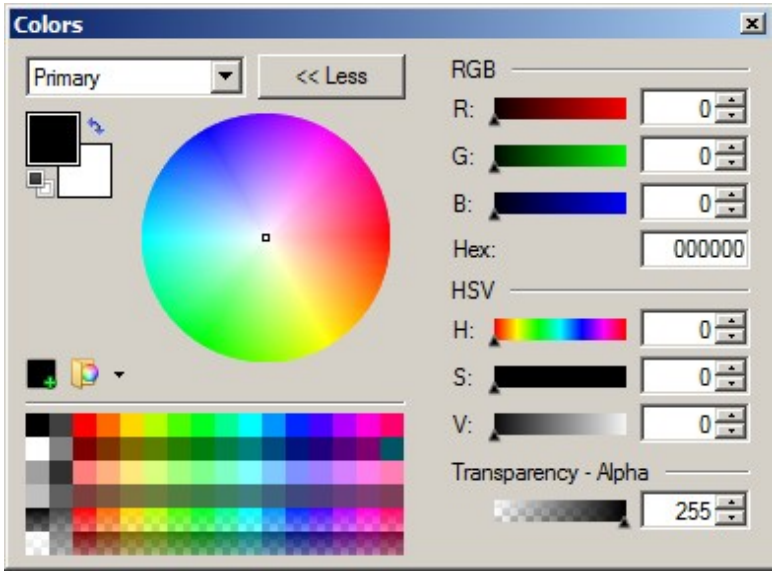
Wed, Feb 20 2013 10:38:31 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In a video released today, ILM shows how they managed to build a digital version of New York City for The Avengers.

An introduction to colors

Tue, Feb 19 2013 22:44:32 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Colors may seem simple as we look at an object and register in our mind what color they are, but when it comes to computer graphics, these have to be represented in some numerical values, and then things tend to become more complex. Thankfully, engineers have developed a series of conventions that people can use to represent a certain color, but how familiar are you with these representations? In this quick introduction we will see some of the most basic concepts like the RGB color model, HSV, the HEX representation and alpha channel, along with the difference between ambient, diffuse and specular colors.



Whether you're working with 2D or 3D software, the color selector shown above may be familiar to you. This particular example comes from a program called Paint.NET but they all have similar concepts. On the upper left is the **color wheel** which shows every color available to you. In nature, there is no limit as to the actual amount of colors that you can pick, but on a computer, for practical reasons, these colors have to be limited to a certain number.

Back in the days of DOS and early Windows or Apple systems, people had to work with 16 colors only. This was very limited, and soon after the amount was brought up to 256 thanks to an increase in memory space. With this number of available colors, artists could finally start doing digital artwork that would mimic real life, but it was still fairly limiting. On modern computers, you have access to 16 million colors or more, which eliminates the need to have such a restricted palette. These colors are all shown on the wheel itself.

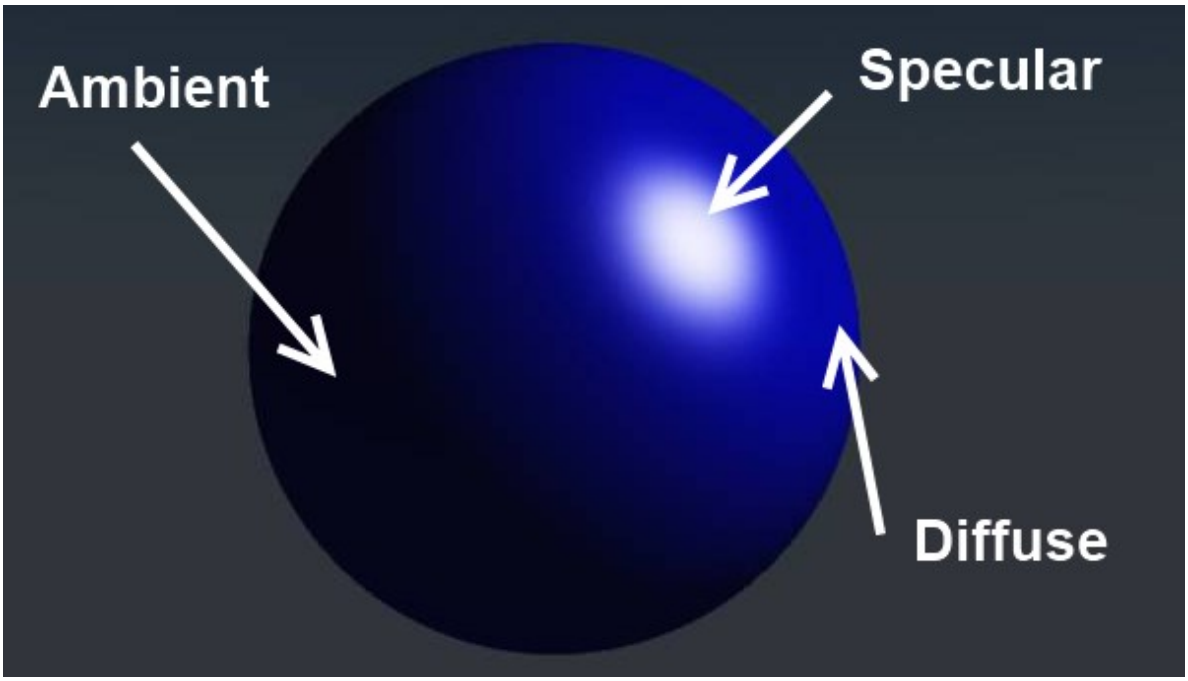
Since it can be almost impossible to remember exactly which color you picked on the wheel, almost all software also provide **swatches**, which are the rectangles you see at the bottom of the image. These allow you to store specific colors for later use. On the right side, you see the various representations of the selected color.

Modern computers work with the **RBG color model**. This is a way to represent a color with 3 values: red, blue and green. These are base colors that get added to one another, with a value between 0 and 255, or one byte. For example, if you have each value at 0, then you get black, since there is no blue, no green and no red. If you have each value at 255, then your color is flooded with each primary color, and you get white. All 16 million colors can be represented this way.

The **HEX value** is exactly the same thing as RGB, but those same values are shown using hexadecimal instead. So instead of 0 to 255 you have 00 to FF. So if you want pure green, you would have 0 blue, 255 green, and 0 red. In HEX, that would be 00FF00. This is something any web designer is familiar with, since web browsers understand these values inside of HTML and CSS files.

Another way to represent the same color is using **HSV**, which stands for hue, saturation and value. This is often used as an easier way for humans to adjust colors, but usually gets transformed back into RGB behind the scenes. Hue specifies which color you want, saturation is how saturated that color is, and value is often referred to as lightness, or how dark the color is.

One other concept which was added further down the line to computer systems is transparency, or the **alpha channel**. This is an added byte between 0 and 255 which specifies how transparent a specific pixel is. While it isn't a color per say, often it's used in combination with the color wheel. Using the alpha channel, you can select a red color at 50% transparency thanks to the alpha channel.



Finally, it can be useful to understand the difference between ambient, diffuse and specular colors. Computer graphic programs have to replicate the way light rays act in real life, and to help do that, an object may accept various types of color. **Diffuse color** is the most basic type, and what most people refer to when talking about the color of an object. It is the color visible when shining a direct, white light on it. **Ambient color** is the color visible in the shadows, visible thanks to ambient light.

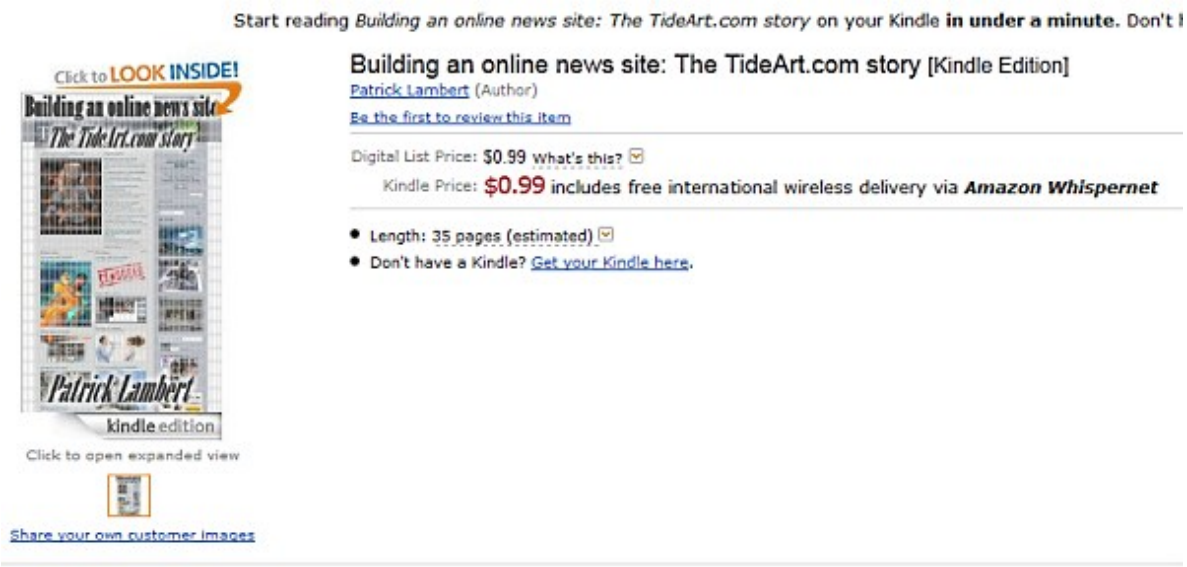
Specular color is the color of the light in specular reflection. For most objects that color will be white. In the case of metallic objects, this will often be the same as the diffuse color. So a red plastic ball will have a white highlight, but a red metallic ball will have a bright red highlight. This is what gives hints as to the composition of the material.

Of course in order to display all that for you, many complex math formulas are used. A popular one is the Phong model, which is a process of calculating the ambient image, then the diffuse one, and finally the specular one, then adding them together to create the final image. But thankfully as artists, we rarely need to go into this much details.

The TideArt story

Tue, Feb 19 2013 19:58:22 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The full story of TideArt has been released just in time for our two years in operation. Check it out on the Amazon Kindle.



This is the story of TideArt.com, a digital art news site which started around two years ago from nothing and grew to serve over 70,000 page views per month from users in 40 countries. By describing what it took to start the site from almost no budget, going through creating the web site, making content, marketing and more, the hope is that anyone who wishes to build a small or medium informational site can learn valuable lessons to apply on their own projects.

This ebook contains approximately 11,000 words.

3D printing pen

Tue, Feb 19 2013 16:44:37 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video we see a new Kickstarter project for a 3D printing pen, allowing anyone to draw 3D shapes.

Thea for 3DS MAX video

Mon, Feb 18 2013 17:49:34 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

This video shows a new plugin for 3DS MAX called Thea.

God of War behind the scenes video

Mon, Feb 18 2013 7:18:39 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The PlayStation channel released a video showing some of the work that went behind the latest God of War game, including some of the motion capture scenes.

Howler terrain animation video

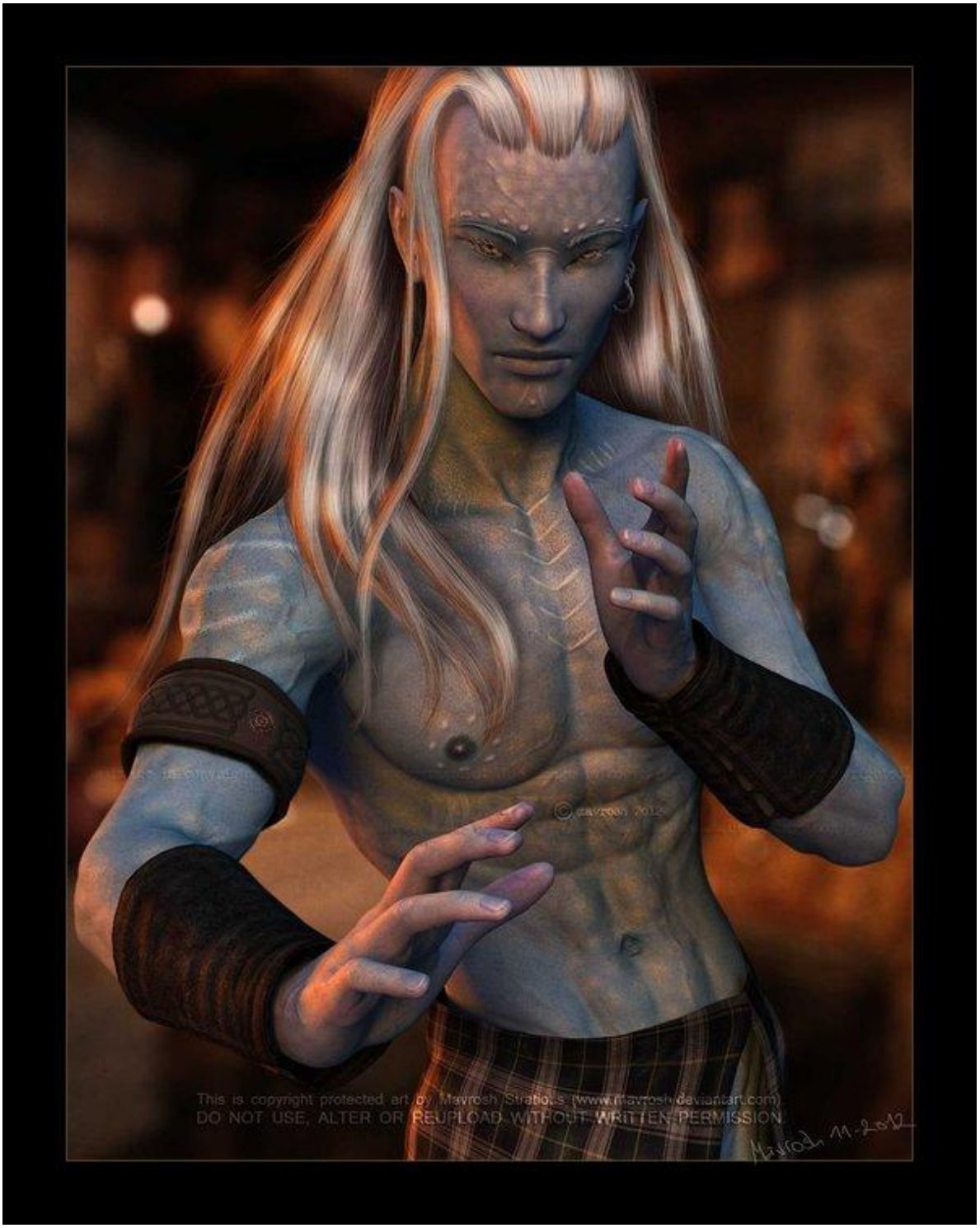
Sun, Feb 17 2013 21:20:26 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Howler Digital Painting recently released version 8.2 which introduces terrain animations, shown in this video.

Artist showcase: Mavrosh

Sun, Feb 17 2013 20:37:52 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to showcase the art of Mavrosh Stratiotis, a 3D digital artist focusing on the male figure.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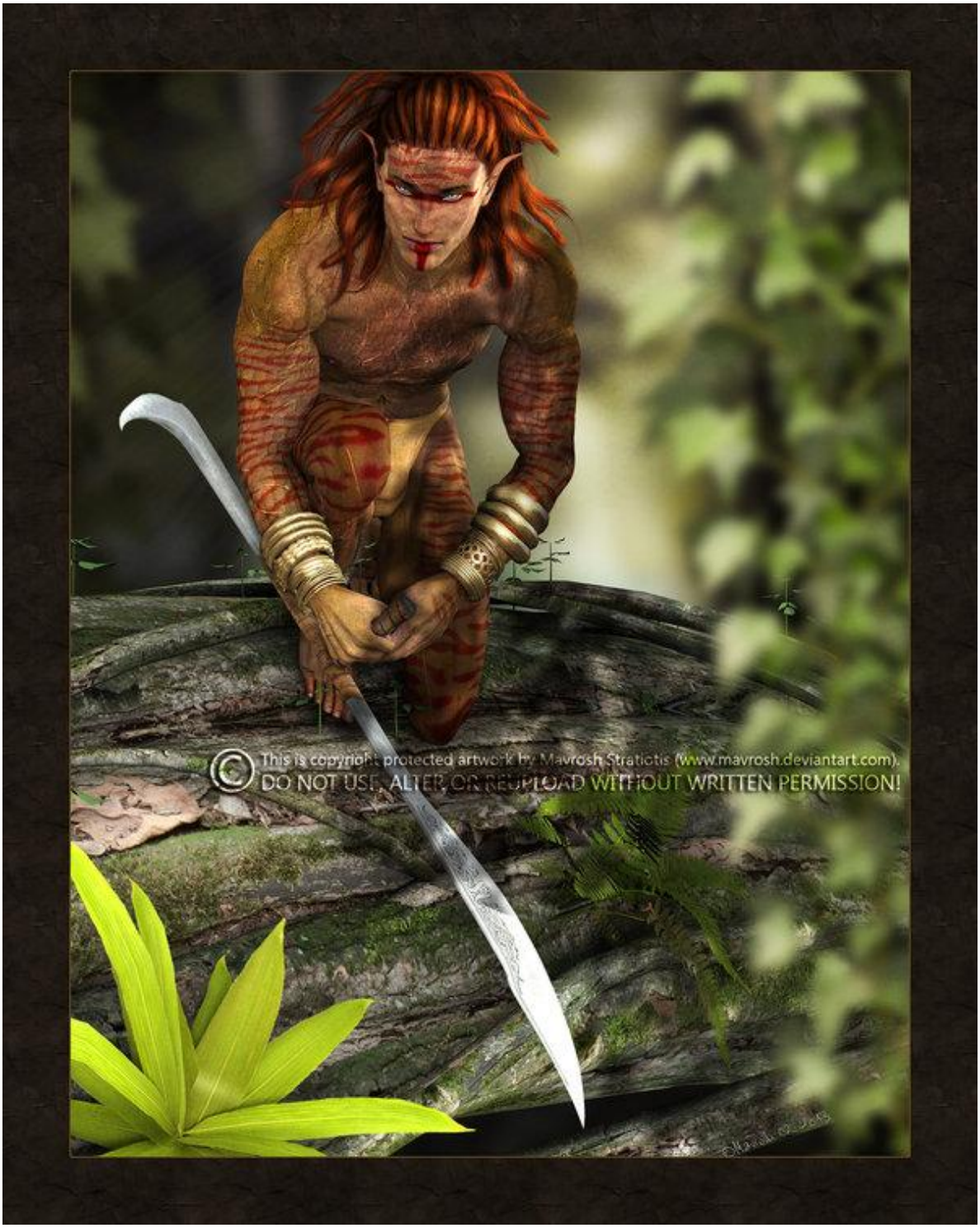
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Shading food case study

Sun, Feb 17 2013 20:20:00 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Often, some types of 3D elements can be harder than others to create realistic looks, and food can be one of them. The folks behind Ratatouille at Pixar published a case study showing how to properly shade and light 3D food.

In the article the artists talk about the approach they took for the animated movie, how to use scatter to capture translucency, and go over the various types of food and what it takes to make them look good.

KeyShot 4 video

Sat, Feb 16 2013 8:22:12 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

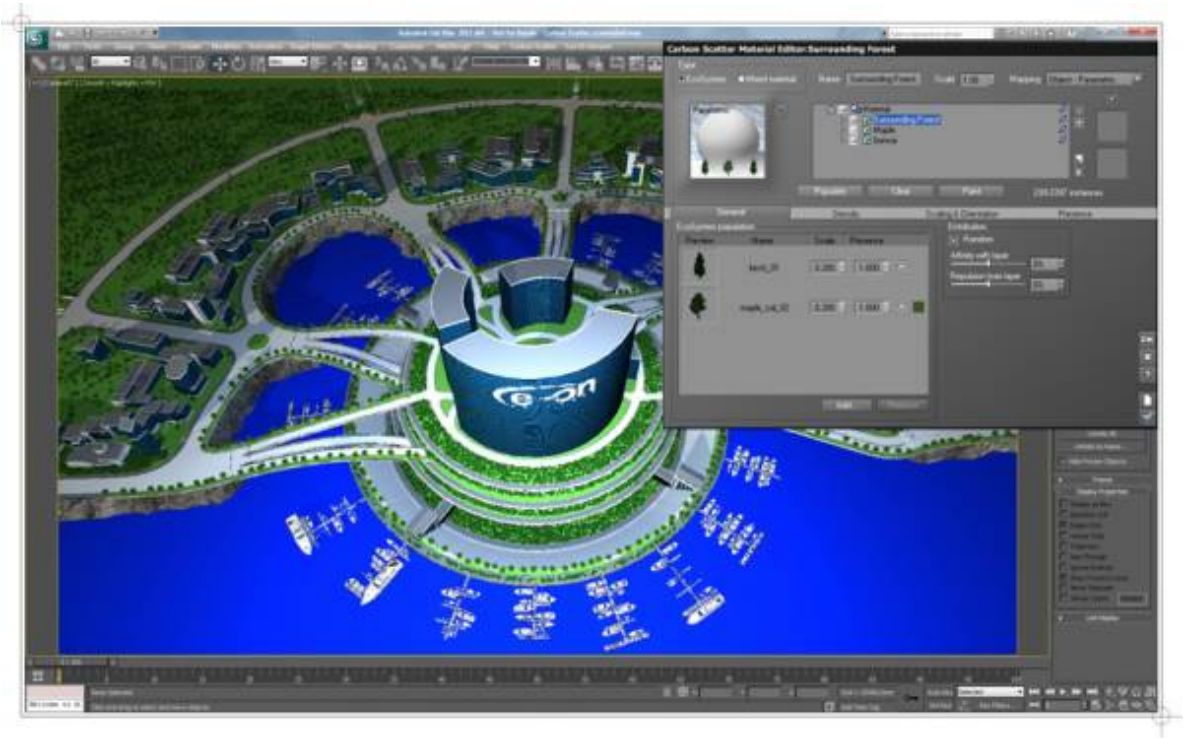
The team behind KeyShot 4 published a video showing some of the new features of their latest release.

Carbon Scatter 2 trial available

Sat, Feb 16 2013 8:17:44 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

E-On Software announced that Carbon Scatter 2 is now available to download as a trial. This new release

provides many new features over the first one and is available as a plugin for 3DS MAX, Maya and Cinema4D.



Some of the features of Carbon Scatter 2 include:

* Over 100 3D plant species (with variations!) and 130+ billboard trees included
* Populate millions of instances per second!
* Interactive population – change a setting and Carbon Scatter repopulates in a blink
* Populate at 360° around objects
* Use the powerful EcoPainter brush to paint-in instances directly with your mouse
* Edit or create your own plant species with the optional Carbon Botanica extension
* Render billions of polygons easily thanks to native instancing
* Works with all your shaders and native previewing options (Nitrous, point-cloud, etc)
* Advanced scattering rules with procedural graph control
* Multi-layer scattering with internal affinity/repulsion
* Scattering inside/along curves
* Stacked instances (e.g. to create piles of rubble)
* Use animated populations with full phasing control
* Enormous library of additional plant species available from cornucopia3d.com*

The trial version ships with a limited collection of plants and polygonal meshes, and is limited to rendering up to a total of 10000 instances. Saving is also disabled.

YouTube introduces new channel layouts

Sat, Feb 16 2013 0:20:57 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under news

YouTube has made several changes in its interface during the last few months, including the integration of YouTube with Google Plus, and the new home feed. But now they are slowly pushing in the YouTube One Channel, which is the name for their new channel page. Right now a few users have the new layout, but it will be applied to all channels in the coming months.

One Channel promises to show a much improved interface along with a responsive design that will look good on desktops, tablets and smartphones. It also provides more customization and new features like the ability to have a trailer play for people who aren't subscribed, that subscribers won't see.

This new channel design will soon be available as an opt in for content producers.

OctaneRender 1.1 video

Fri, Feb 15 2013 17:15:57 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video, the team behind OctaneRender shows some of the new features in version 1.1.

Behind the deconstruction of an ultrabook

Fri, Feb 15 2013 17:09:48 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video, the crew behind the video Deconstruction of an Ultrabook shows how the short was made.

Dealing with censorship

Fri, Feb 15 2013 1:53:39 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Censorship is a concept that is as old as people have been able to draw or write on walls, and artists are particularly vulnerable to it. There have been many high profile cases of obvious censorship, where a group of people or the state takes position and decides that a particular work of art must be banned for some reason, usually because it offends whatever moral values happen to be dominant at the time. This can be an issue for any type of content creator, whether it's a book writer trying to write provocative thoughts on paper in Hitler's Germany, or a painter attempting to portray nudity during the Middle Ages.

Types of censorship

But censorship is not always so obvious. Often it can be insidious and kept under the table. It can be done through very subtle means, and hard to detect until it's too late. Many people would be shocked to realize how much censoring still goes on to this day. Whether it's Madonna who saw several of her videos censored in the UK, Mike Diana being convicted for drawing obscene images in the US, or cartoonists threatened in Denmark by religious zealots.

Censorship is typically based on social values. Back during the Middle Ages, religion had a heavy presence on western Europe, and as such artists had many constraints. But it was not seen as censorship, it was simply morality and common sense. To do otherwise would be seen as being depraved or evil. Now, religion is still present in many parts of the world, but less so in the west. Few artists in the US or UK, for example, would decide to self-censor in the fear of religious reprisal, but that isn't the case in countries like Pakistan or Iran.

In North America, nudity is seen in a very different way than in Europe. Often nudity is equaled to pornography and given a negative connotation. Even if religion isn't directly behind it, an artists that decides to create nude art will often face being called perverted. Violence on the other hand is common. This in turn leads to many works of art featuring violent scenes and enjoying a completely open viewership. Meanwhile, Europe is often the exact opposite, with many more people being sensitive to violence than in the US, but nudity being a much less taboo subject.

Dealing with censorship when it happens

Regardless of the exact type of censorship or where it happens, how can you, as an artist, deal with it? There are many ways to approach censorship. Some make it their mission to defeat bans and do everything they can to provoke. Art by itself often provokes people, but when an artist purposely goes after the common social order or morals, then they can quickly take center stage. The resulting celebrity can be a great reward, but can also be very dangerous.

Another way to face censorship is through the courts. The first amendment in the US provides a lot of protections to content creators, and many times artists have relied on the constitution to protect their rights. But this mostly works for state censorship. There are many cases where the first amendment is of little use. For example, if a publisher decides to deny you and you suspect it's because you touched a sensitive subject. In many cases, censorship cannot be proven, only guessed.

To combat this type of censorship, the best way is to bypass the censor. Instead of relying on publishers or galleries, go for a self-publishing model, or make your own site where you can expose your art. If you reach your own public, instead of relying on someone else to be the intermediary, then you avoid any potential for censorship. The public can then decide for itself whether they like what they see.

Unfortunately, there is also a lot of self-censorship going on as well. Many artists, consciously or not, will actively decide against making content that may rock the boat. This is not necessarily so much cowardice as it is self-preservation. Artists are persecuted routinely for their work, and it's only normal that many would want to avoid such a fate.

In the end, there is no best solution on how to deal with censorship. It is up to each content creator and each artist to decide whether they are willing to go against the current, and if they are censored, whether they want to rise up to the injustice and become a martyr, use legal means, or attempt to bypass the censor and go directly to the source. In each case there are potential repercussions, and it is up to each of us to decide how we deal with them.

Mental Core 1.5v1 update

Thu, Feb 14 2013 20:48:49 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

A new version of MentalCore, 1.5v1, has been released. This is a shading, lighting and rendering plugin for Maya and Mental Ray which aims at improving the workflow of 3D artists.

The new version includes several new features like:

* New 'Light Select' Render Pass
* New 'Diagnostic' Render Passes
* New Texture Lookup Shader
* New Architectural Light Shader
* UI Rebranding

123D Creature released on iPad

Thu, Feb 14 2013 20:43:32 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Autodesk has been busy releasing new apps on iOS and today it launches its latest called 123D Creature, which is an app based on their earlier 123D Sculpt, but in this case the aim is to create creatures and monsters on your tablet.

The new app is on a debut pricing of $1.99 for now and provides all of the usual sculpting and painting tools that someone would need to easily create creatures on their iPad, with the ability to export an image, model or 3D print.

The evolution of real time graphics

Wed, Feb 13 2013 10:39:15 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under videos

In this long video we can see the nVidia graphic demos from 2000 to 2013 and the evolution of real time

graphics.

Rhythm & Hues bankruptcy may indicate troubled VFX industry

Wed, Feb 13 2013 7:25:29 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

In a move that surprised the whole industry, Rhythm & Hues has filed for bankruptcy just a day after winning the 2013 BAFTA awards for visual effects for their movie *Life of Pi*.

While companies are typically not always very stable in Hollywood, due to the type of contracts many of them get, this shows that even when at the very top, being at the Oscars, they can go down in flame when a single contract doesn't pan out. A deal with Prime Focus supposed to keep the company afloat fell through, and now R&H has no choice but to close its doors.

Perhaps more than any other in the past, this bankruptcy is sending a chilling effect through the other VFX companies and industry experts who now admit there may be a deeply rooted problem.

Interview with Zarathul

Tue, Feb 12 2013 23:24:23 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Andrew Hunter, best known as Zarathul, an erotic fantasy artist.

Could you describe yourself and tell us a bit about your background?

I am an artist and writer who grew up along with the early fantasy gaming scene and spent a lot of years working in the video game industry. I have some formal training, but most everything else I learned from colleagues, research, and a great deal of trial and error... mostly error.

When did you start making art and how do you feel your images have evolved over time?

I don't remember when I started making art, as soon as I figured out how to hold a pencil, I suppose. My earliest drawings were of fighter planes and explosions. I then moved on to skulls and dragons and the sort. My passion for depicting the female form kicked in about the time I started learning to shave and has dominated most of my themes ever since. My early attempts at drawing people proved a sort of nightmarish mix of comic book stylization and realism. I've come to appreciate the value of both approaches, when properly separated, but I still consider my style very much a work-in-progress.

A lot of your images involve nudity, is this a conscientious choice for you?

Yes, very much so. I remember a number of years ago, having my portfolio reviewed by an older artist who pointed out the ridiculous lengths to which I was going to cover up the naughty bits on my drawings of women. He frowned and simply asked, ''Why are you doing that?''

Having been raised in a very conservative home, I had always felt ashamed of depicting anything overtly sexual in my art and wound up turning even the most innocent of poses into some sort of strip tease. I'm much older now, but I still struggle with many of the taboos that American culture imposes on human sexuality. I find it infuriating that we can swallow violence and gore by the bucketload, but depicting a woman's bare breast is tantamount to universal child-abuse.

What do you enjoy most about the type of art you create?

I suppose my erotic art is really my attempt at self-therapy. On one level, part of me is screaming that I should keep this horrible filth hidden away in the closet lest I corrupt a new generation of youth, warping their ideals and turning them into monsters like myself. Then I remember that no one warped me.

I can honestly remember having dreams about dark and erotic scenes when I was five years old. I learned very quickly not to tell my mother about such dreams, but they still continued, no matter how deeply I buried them. There were, perhaps, elements of popular culture that shaped my imagination as I grew, the fantasy gaming scene, for one, but I was not, as the parents of the 80's feared, defiled by the black arts of Dungeons and Dragons and twisted into something that I was not before.

We don't get to choose our muses, and if we try to stifle the message of our art, it comes out perverted and sickly. Part of me still wishes that I was good at painting puppy dogs and flowers, but that's not what I see when I close my eyes.

What made you think of making an art book?

I have years upon years of drawings and paintings piled up in stacks of papers and in files on hard drives. My experience in layout from my last day job taught me everything I needed to know to start compiling these works into book form. The only thing keeping me from doing it was the nagging voice of doubt in my own self-worth. I finally decided to tell that voice to shut the hell up.

Did you have any experience making books or ebooks?

I've published a few fantasy novels in ebook form, the adult-themed Tanys series and my young-adult series beginning with The Necromancer's Nephew. Preparing these traditional novels had been relatively easy, with the help of my wife, as services like Kindle and Smashwords are very user-friendly for text-heavy works. It is what those services were made for, and they work beautifully.

When it came to prepping my art book, however, the ebook version proved something of a challenge. Since the ebook can appear on anything from an iPhone to a Kindle, there is no standard aspect ratio or resolution to aim for. I had to make my best guess at what would maintain the quality of the art while keeping the file size low enough that it doesn't break someone's cell phone. I still live in fear that someone is going to post a review that says my ebook erased all the photos of their grandma from their iPhone or something.

As for the print book, setting that up through CreateSpace on Amazon turned out to be amazingly straightforward, since I was so used to prepping files for print at my previous job. I'm not certain how friendly it would be for someone completely inexperienced with print, but I must say that I was impressed with the ease of setup and the quality of the finished print.

How long and complicated was it to create?

Having all the art except the cover finished before I began work on Shadowlust, it took me only a few days to do the layout in InDesign. Most of that was tweaking and revising. I had thrown together the meat of the

book in about an hour and a half, and the rest of it was nudging type and images. The cover art I made specifically for the book, and I only spent a few days on that.

I know some artists that spend weeks on these beautiful, polished paintings and then shrug their shoulders and call it ''concept art'', but I can never spend that much time on anything. I work fast and get the images in my head burned to paper as quickly as possible. When I'm drawing, I don't have the patience to iterate and revise a great deal, because I've always got the next idea crowding forward and demanding its chance at expression.

How has the feedback been so far?

The book was just released, so the feedback on it has been a bit scant so far. The art inside it, however, has mostly been seen on the deviantART site in the past, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

What has amazed me most is the number of women that have expressed their admiration for the themes of my art. I have always been afraid that my art could be taken as misogynistic, what with all the monsters threatening women and all, but I really don't hate women. I love women. I've always felt more comfortable around women than men, and I identify a great deal with the feminine spirit. I see a lot of peril art that really denigrates women, making them into some sort of dim-witted victim that is getting her comeuppance, but that's not what my art is about. The women in my art may not always be in control of their situations, but they are clever and strong, and many women, and men as well, can identify with the fantasy of being in these dangerous situations.

Do you plan on making more ebooks in the future?

Definitely! I hoping to release more in the Shadowlust series, focusing on specific themes, in the future.

Thank you for your interest, and I hope that you enjoy my art.

Blender destruction video tutorial

Tue, Feb 12 2013 9:05:38 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

This video shows a tutorial of how to create some destruction in a Blender scene.

CGSociety TEN celebration winners

Mon, Feb 11 2013 19:13:36 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

CGSociety announced the winners of its latest competition titled TEN which was launched as part of the site's 10 years celebration.

The contestants were asked to integrate the word ten in an image or animation that they would create for the biggest competition the site has run. Several winners were chosen to receive prizes from dozens of companies in the industry. You can see the list of winners along with their entries on the official site.

Artist showcase: Sarah Perryman

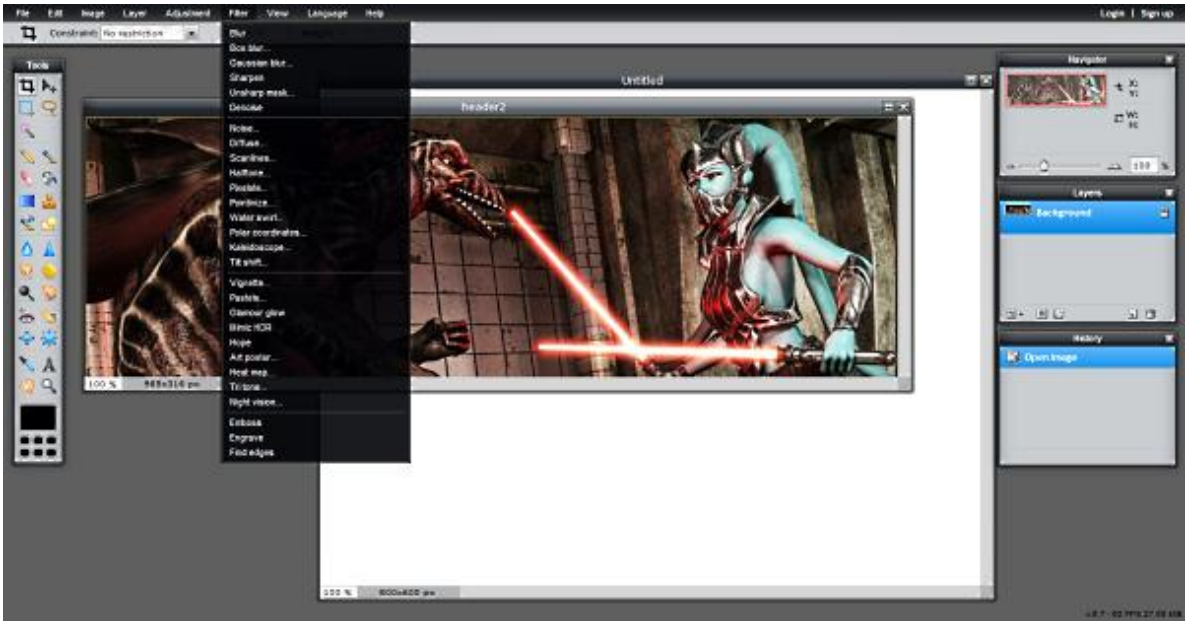
Sun, Feb 10 2013 21:40:20 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature the art of Sarah Perryman, a colorist and comic artist form the US.

Pixlr Editor review

Sat, Feb 9 2013 20:18:03 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

It was not that long ago that web apps were in their concept stage, where people would create demos of what was supposed to be coming down the line, but in many of these cases they went to become forgotten and few people paid attention to them. But now, web apps have become a standard way to be productive for many people. Simply using things like Google Docs or Microsoft SkyDrive, it's easy to see how versatile web apps can be. For artists however, most of us stay on the desktop with full fledged applications like Adobe Photoshop or Autodesk 3DS MAX. But can image editing be done through the web? Here is a quick review of Pixlr Editor, one such editor.



Pixlr is a company that started making web apps a while back and was eventually bought by Autodesk. Now they are making several web apps for various audiences, along with some mobile apps as well. Their most powerful web app is the Flash based Pixlr Editor. Simply looking at it and going through the features it offers can be impressive. From a first glance, it appears to have a lot of the typical tools and windows we would expect out of a paint program.

In the main interface you can find layers, history, tools and a navigator. The editor supports multiple images opened at the same time. In the tools, everything you would expect is there including a color picker, various selection tools, drawing tools, text, spot heal, bloat, clone stamp, and so on. In the top menus, you can find a long list of adjustments and filters, the typical ones you may find in a desktop software.

When it comes to standard image manipulation, all of the tools work in the way you would expect. Cropping an image simply involves using the right tool and dragging a rectangle around your selection. These selections can be manipulated in all of the usual ways, making you forget that all of this is happening in a web browser. Layers are also very powerful. For example, if you write using the text tool, it creates a new layer automatically and lets you edit that text later on, until you rasterize the layer. There are even layer masks for you to use, something that my personal favorite desktop software, Paint.NET, doesn't have.

Filters focus more on what you would expect from a professional app, such as blur, diffuse and find edges, rather than the Instagram type fun filters. Adjustments cover everything from brightness, saturation, hue, exposure, curves, levels and so on. The interface for using all of these tools is very consistent and again reminds you of a desktop app much more than a web based one.

Finally, all of these tools would not be very useful if you were stuck in the browser environment, but thankfully Pixlr has many options both for importing and saving images. Every user can open and save images in their own libraries, but you can also fetch or save an image to your own computer, a URL, Facebook, Flickr and Picasa. Overall, there is no question that Pixlr Editor is a very powerful image editor.

Pros:

* Clean, easy to use interface.
* Very powerful tools and filters.
* Access to many import and export options.
* Free.

Cons:

* Uses Flash so not compatible with some devices.

DreamUp site for art commissions now in beta

Fri, Feb 8 2013 9:16:41 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Today DeviantART started advertising their new platform called DreamUp, a site still in beta which aims at connecting artists with people looking for commission works. People can sign up either as a creative, willing to create content for others, or request an invite to be a client.

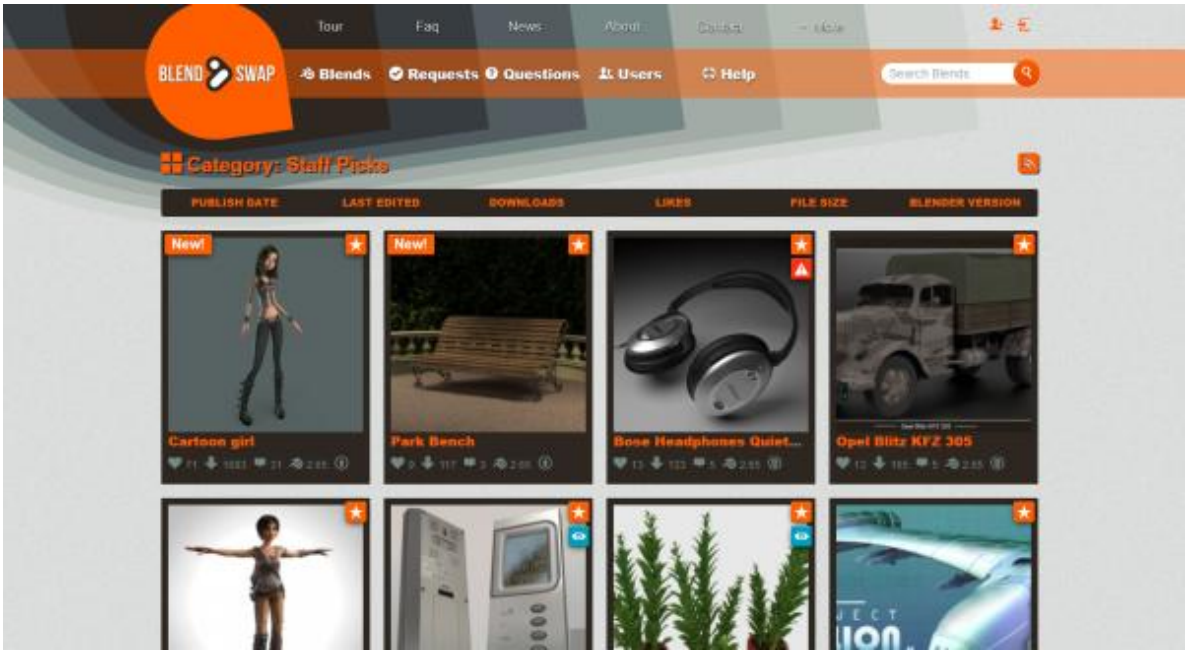
DreamUp seems to want to solve one of the long standing problems that many people have with DeviantART, which is how to manage commissions. For many hobbyists or freelance artists, commissions can be a great way to earn extra revenue, but getting clients and artists in contact can be a challenge, as people scan the many DA users trying to see who offers services and at what price.

DreamUp is currently in beta, and people can sign up as a creative or a client. Right now, artists have to be accepted based on the answers they give on the sign up form, while clients will be invited to use the site later on as it progresses through beta.

Blend Swap interview

Thu, Feb 7 2013 21:46:19 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Matthew Muldoon from Blend Swap, the main model repository for Blender 3D.



Could you briefly describe yourself and your background?

My names Matthew Muldoon, I'm 31 years old, have a wife and a 7 month old daughter. I've been an artist my whole life, it was the only thing I could ever seem to do well. I went to a 2 year tech school and got my degree in Communication Art and Design. Got hooked on video and motion graphics and that's what I've been doing ever since. I've been working in advertising for about 15 years now... wow, I'm one of those old guys now. I've been involved with Blender on and off for about 10 years. I was always drawn toward 3D but could never justify spending all that money on a 3D software just for a hobby. Then I found Blender 3D and I've been hooked ever since.

What is BlendSwap and the features it offers?

Blend Swap is the main model repository for Blender 3D. All of our models are offered via Creative Commons licensing. They're Open Source and free to download and use. Just like Blender 3D. Some of the key features of the site are portfolio's, collections, private messages, advance stats on 3D models shared and easy messaging between artist to name a very small list of the sites features.

What made you decide to start such a site?

I remember trying out lots of different software when I started to get into 3D, Lightwave, Cinema4D, Maya, Electric Image (ya lets see who remembers that one) and all the software's had pretty good user bases and communities. Then I found Blender 3D and like I said I was hooked, there was a great community but not a really good model sharing site. I had the naive thought, I can start a site like that'' I knew a little programing and WordPress really well. LOL, well after having to pay an actual developer a couple thousand to get the site to do what I wanted, I launched Blend Swap and it's been a wild rollercoaster ride ever since.

Why would someone share models in .blend format on your site rather than on one of the many other 3D sharing sites?

We really cater to the Blender 3D community, we are very tight knit and our users can come to our site and find specific models for the software they use, so I assume it's just easier for them to use us. Instead of looking on another site finding a model in a obj or 3ds format and having to convert it in Blender.

Is this a full time job for you, is the site bringing in a good income?

In my dreams, I would love to make Blend Swap a full time job, but it has a lot of growing up to get there. The site brings in enough money to pay for server costs and very, very modest payments to my amazing developer Jonathan Acosta. We both dream that one day we can work on Blend Swap full time. But for now that's just a dream.

What kind of feedback have you seen so far from users?

Our users are great, amazing, spectacular…. I'm not sure if there is a word good enough to describe our users. They are the one and only reason Blend Swap exists. From the very beginning of Blend Swap the users have been great. Offering donations and server space and bandwidth when we were going through growing pains. Even helping develop site features in the early stages before Jonathan came on board. Most importantly they keep sharing models with the community.

What are your views on the Blender community?

The Guys/Girls of the Blender community are AMAZING!! Blender really does have one of the most amazing communities I have ever seen. I've been around for awhile and have been witness to many different communities including After Effects, Design, Mograph, even C4D and none of them can hold a candle to the Blender Community in my opinion..

You regularly seem to improve the site's user interface, do you have any upcoming features or services in the work?

Well we just launched our 5th version in 3 years a couple of days ago. This was our most ambitious version yet, we moved from a Wordpress based site to a fully custom web app. Jonathan spent about a year on the development of this version. We've also added many features for artist to showcase their work and be easily found for freelance work.

Cyberpunk 2077 teaser behind the scenes shots

Thu, Feb 7 2013 19:12:48 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under news

ArtofVfx has an interview with the CG director working on the upcoming game title Cyberpunk 2077, along with a series of behind the scenes shots that were used to create the teaser video.

In it, we learn that the creators drew their inspirations from the original printed cyberpunk material, what their relations are with CD Projekt, the game creators, and how big their team was to create such a project.

V-Ray 2.40.01 for 3DS MAX

Thu, Feb 7 2013 9:18:17 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

The Chaos Group announced the availability of their latest update of V-Ray for 3DS MAX. After the recent release of the Softimage version, now the 3DS MAX version reaches 2.40.01 and contains a series of new

and improved features.

Some of the new features include:

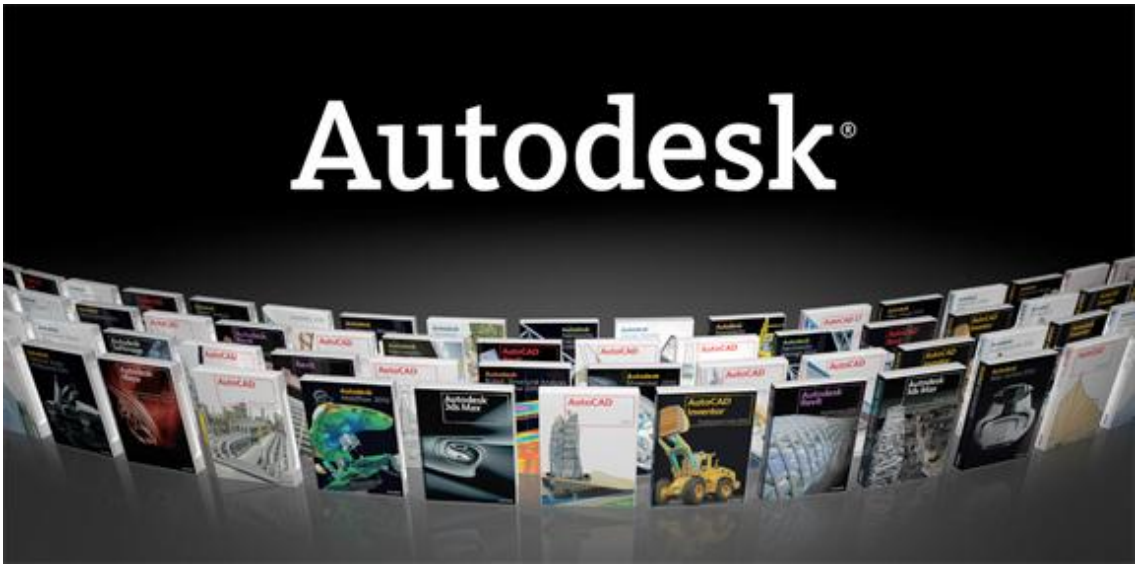
* VRayHairFarmMod: Added support for rendering HairFarm 2.0 with V-Ray.
* VRayProxy: Support for Alembic .abc files.
* V-Ray RT: Support for instancing.
* V-Ray RT: Support for Forest Pro instancing.
* V-Ray RT CPU: Faster update when adjusting VRayLights.
*V-Ray RT GPU: CUDA speed optimizations and optimizations for GK110 cards.
* V-Ray RT GPU: Support for the ColorCorrection texture.
* V-Ray RT GPU: Support for the Mix texture.

The update can be downloaded now from their web site.

Autodesk subscription prices increasing

Wed, Feb 6 2013 22:27:21 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

If you are on an annual subscription with Autodesk, you may have noticed a price increase for upgrades and new subscription options. The company clarified on its web site, and now it seems that international customers will see qa similar increase in mid-March, according to a post on the UK site.



The news post did not say how much the prices would rise abroad, but they did clearly indicate that an increase would come, and why Autodesk was adjusting prices:

In March 2012, Subscription pricing for the majority of Autodesk products was adjusted worldwide. For most products, this resulted in a modest increase to Subscription pricing, while for some products, Subscription pricing decreased slightly.

At that time, applicable Subscription pricing increases came into effect on the sale of new seats, and

applicable Subscription pricing decreases came into effect on renewals.

The cost of renewing an existing seat on Subscription will increase marginally to align with last year's new seat Subscription price changes.*
When will Subscription renewal pricing changes take effect?

The Subscription renewal pricing changes will take effect on 28 March 2013.*

V-Ray RT with Forest Pro 4 video

Wed, Feb 6 2013 22:15:47 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

This is a video showing tests of GPU instancing with V-Ray RT GPU 2.4 and Forest Pro 4.

Artist showcase: Y-Kanno

Wed, Feb 6 2013 22:07:14 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're happy to feature the art of y-kanno, also known as tetsuok9999, a hobbyist from Japan.

http://tetsuok9999.deviantart.com/

http://tetsuok9999.deviantart.com/

http://tetsuok9999.deviantart.com/

Blender 2.66 public test builds

Wed, Feb 6 2013 21:52:34 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Good news for Blender users who like to stay on the cutting edge, the developers behind this popular open source 3D software released the first official test builds for version 2.66 on their web site.

Note that these are still considered beta and could contain bugs. Use at your own risk.

V-Ray 1.6 for Softimage

Tue, Feb 5 2013 21:31:01 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

The Chaos Group, which makes the popular V-Ray rendering engine, announced its latest version of V-Ray for Softimage, version 1.6, which brings various new features and enhancements.

Some of the new improvements include:

* Distributed Rendering support
* Much improved ICE support
* New noise texture
* Support for importing Alembic meshes
* Improved mapping of multi-cluster geometry to V-Ray proxies
* Performance improvements in the exporter
* Support for property overrides
* Improved Multimatte texture, including material IDs
* Support for environment fog gizmo objects
* Sphere fade support

The team calls it a *semi-beta* build, and anyone who is a 1.5 user can download it for free.

After Effects motion tracking video

Mon, Feb 4 2013 23:59:53 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

This video tutorial shows us how to do some very useful 2D motion tracking in After Effects.

Blender sci-fi weapon video timelapse

Mon, Feb 4 2013 23:21:16 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video timelapse, Alex Telford shows the creation of a sci-fi weapon using Blender 3D.

CD Projekt shows off REDengine 3

Mon, Feb 4 2013 9:01:47 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under news

CD Projekt, best known for The Witcher series, announced REDengine 3, the latest version of their gaming engine. An earlier release powers The Witcher 2, and according to their press release, the new engine has some unique capabilities for game makers.

According to CD Projekt, REDengine 3 will allow them to have massive worlds with highly immersive RPG story lines. This is typically hard to do in a single game, and REDengine 3 will enable this. The technology is made to create nonlinear and story-driven RPGs with a system that allows streaming and handling fully explorable open worlds. Their upcoming Cyberpunk 2077 game will take full advantage of these advantages when it is released.

The company says that their proprietary editor can build complex quests and set them in a free roaming environment with a simplicity not achieved by similar tool sets.

Underworld Awakening vfx breakdown video

Sun, Feb 3 2013 19:03:30 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

This video shows some of the behind the scenes and VFX breakdowns for the recent horror film Underworld Awakening.

Tomb Raider DeviantART contest

Sun, Feb 3 2013 0:12:44 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Artists and fans of Lara Croft are encouraged to participate in the latest contest DeviantART launched in collaboration with Square Enix to celebrate the launch of the latest Tomb Raider game in the series this coming March.

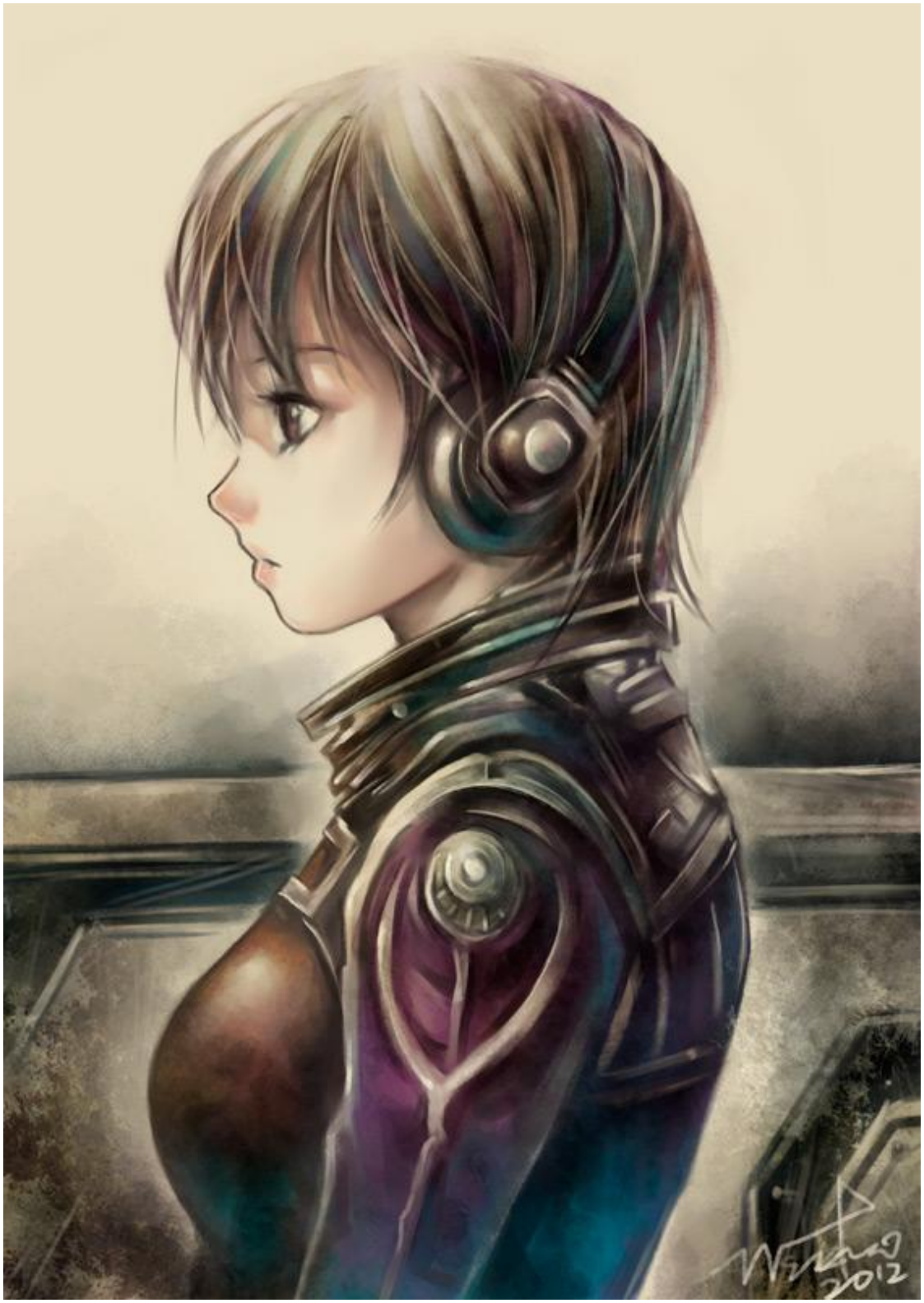
The competition, called Tomb Raider Reborn Contest, allows anyone to submit an entry depicting Lara in her new environment. The winner will be displayed on Tomb Raider merchandise, and several prizes can be won including an XBox 360, cash, swag and more. All you have to do is download the asset pack, read the rules and create your interpretation of Lara Croft.

Submissions are accepted on the official page until March 14th.

Artist showcase: Yucheng Hu

Fri, Feb 1 2013 23:50:02 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're happy to feature the art of Yucheng Hu also known as WUDUO from Taiwan.


2012

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WUDUD STUDIO
wudus.deviantart.com

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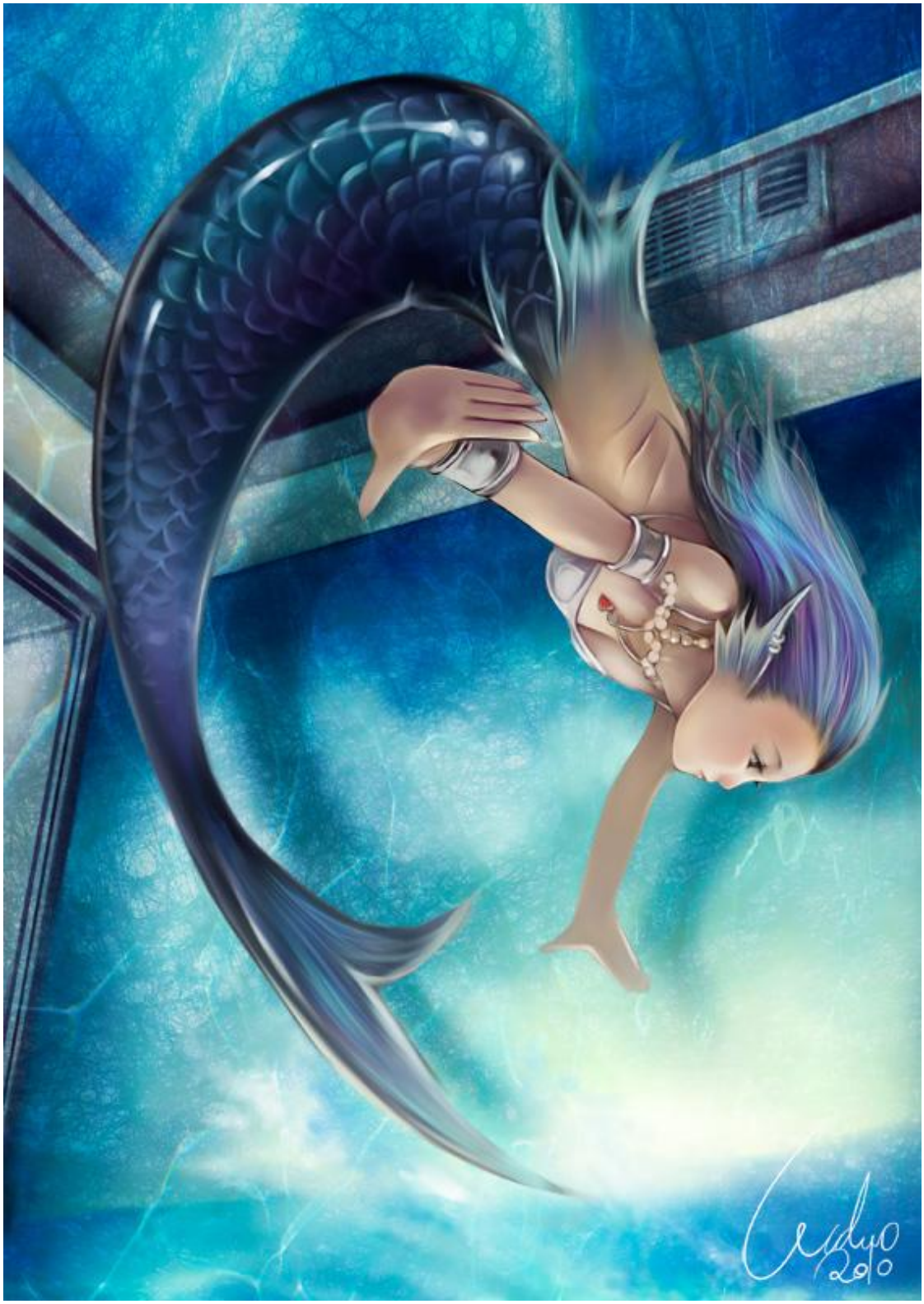


LightWave 11.5 available

Fri, Feb 1 2013 1:53:16 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

NewTek announced today the availability of LightWave 11.5, the latest version of their popular 3D modeling solution, used by many 3D artists and VFX producers.

The latest release offers a lot of new and improved features, including:

* Flexible Soft Body Bullet Dynamics
* Impressive After Effects Integration
* Enhanced Interactive Modeling Tools
* Innovative Genoma Character Rigging System
* Production-Proven Integrated Renderer
* Super Fast Bullet Dynamics
* Interactive Rendering in VPR
* Incredible Instancing
* Exciting New Flocking Features
* Integrated Python Scripting
* Robust ZBrush GoZ Support
* Effective Unity Game Engine Support
* Powerful Geometry Cache System (MDD & Autodesk Geometry Cache)
* Rock Solid FBX I/O for Rigs, Geometry, Lights, and Camera
* Flexible Stereoscopic Camera

A full list of features is available on their web site along with upgrade options.

Adobe MAX 2013

Thu, Jan 31 2013 19:20:58 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The Adobe MAX 2013 conference has been announced by the company at the Los Angeles convention center for May 4-8, where over 5,000 industry leaders, artists, photographers, designers and developers will get together to talk about the future of the creative suite, share ideas and innovations.

There, people will be able to talk to and learn from Adobe experts, and a full pass will grant you access to an annual Creative Cloud membership. The admission fee is not cheap however at $1,495 for the regular, full access entry. Students will be able to get in at the much reduced $299 price.

Registration is available on the official site.

Blender node compositing tutorial

Thu, Jan 31 2013 19:13:19 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video, Reynante Martinez shows us how to use the Blender node compositing functions.

Hawken PhysX video

Wed, Jan 30 2013 22:27:54 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under videos

The developers of Hawken talk about PhysX from nVidia and show off the differences it makes in the game.

The art of criticism

Wed, Jan 30 2013 22:24:33 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Good feedback is rare. Yet, as most artists realize at some point, getting constructive criticism can be useful to get better at your work. Nobody is perfect, and very few people would argue that their work is as good as it possibly could be. But despite that fact, handling criticism is hard. In fact, both giving and receiving criticism is an art by itself. What often happens is that many content creators place the burden of giving good feedback on the users, simply ignoring or brushing away what they consider as non-useful feedback, while many users think that their comments were pertinent, and decide that if the creator of the work ignores them, then clearly they can't take criticism. But the truth is that criticism is like a dance. It takes two to tango.

Giving good criticism

Feedback starts with the one who gives it, and the way criticism is given goes a long way as to how it will

be received. This is why it's important to keep some things in mind when you're about to post some feedback about an artwork, a piece of content, on anything that somebody created. The first key fact is that there is no universal good taste. Everyone likes different subjects, different topics, and what seems ugly to you may be beautiful to someone else. Regardless of your own thoughts about how good or bad something is, always keep in mind that you do not speak for the world, and that those are likely only your own opinions.

This in turn leads to a nasty habit that a lot of critics seem to exhibit, and that is the fact that they are the only ones with the skills to comment on a piece of content. This is what often leads to flame wars, or comment threads degenerating into useless arguments. When you decide to take the time to write some criticism about something, remember that the original creator may object, but so may other viewers. In a similar way, if you see someone else post feedback that you think is wrong, resist the temptation to hijack the discussion in order to attack that person, and instead keep focus on the work itself.

Finally, remember that even if you do have valid, constructive criticism, with real solutions that would improve the work in some way, always remember that this does not mean that the resulting work will get changed. The author has no obligation towards you to follow this feedback, and there could be a lot of reasons you may not be aware of that prevents this change from occurring.

So how do you give good criticism? First, choose your words carefully. *Good* is not the same thing as *like*, and *dislike* does not mean *bad*. Then, keep in mind the goals and intent of the author. Even if you think an image should be framed differently, perhaps it was done this way because the intent was to show it in a particular way. Finally, always give useful advices so that your feedback is not just negative commentary, but becomes constructive instead.

Being on the receiving end

Feedback is not something that is solely the realm of the viewer. Being good at receiving criticism is also very important. It helps you digest feedback so that you get more out of it, and possibly improve your work in a more significant way. It helps prevent you from lashing out at commenters and getting bad PR, and it helps keep your stress level down.

The first thing to remember is that arguing about art is pointless, because unlike science or other factual events, no one has the correct answer. By its very nature, art can be enjoyed or disliked, and no one has the right to tell somebody what they should or shouldn't like. Regardless of how good any artist is, there will always be people who dislike what they do. You need to be able to read feedback and determine with a cool head whether or not they have a point, and if those are things you can improve on. Taking things too personally is never a good thing.

Assuming that you are right all the time is also a bad way to start a discussion. And in the end, this is what feedback is, a discussion of tastes and opinions. So if something seems unclear, or if you aren't sure what someone means, feel free to ask them, clarify their position, perhaps they do have a pertinent thing to say, something that could be improved in some way. Don't automatically assume the worst, and if a comment seems negative, reread it to make sure you aren't simply taking the words out of context.

Finally, always make sure you are in control of the feedback process. There are a lot of trolls on the Internet, and you will always receive feedback that is mean and degrading, this is a byproduct of anonymity. But the worse thing you can do is give up and close all avenues of feedback, because then you deprive yourself of useful comments. Instead, learn to have a thick skin and to moderate that criticism. If you run a commenting system, make sure you have approvals turned on so you can avoid spam and trolls. If someone sends you nasty comments, ignore them instead of replying. Don't feed the trolls, but keep an open mind for constructive comments, and it will help you become a better artist in the end.

Star Trek featurette

Wed, Jan 30 2013 21:44:26 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Director J.J.Abrams talks about the upcoming Star Trek film and the innovations they used in the production of this movie.

HDR Light Studio 4

Tue, Jan 29 2013 19:56:21 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

The latest version of HDR Light Studio 4 was released for 3DS MAX and V-Ray today with a series of enhanced features that allows live connections which allows artists to light their scenes with real-time feedback using V-Ray RT using the ActiveShade renderer and HDR Light Studio's interactive HDR canvas.

Since the first version in 2009, this plugin has provided a fast way to light a 3D scene with photo-real results, while fitting into major 3D rendering pipelines used in the industry. It's especially designed to light CGI shots of cars, jewelry and for animated TV commercials and movie VFX scenes.

The latest Live connection release is a provided as a free update for existing HDR Light Studio 4 customers.

Creation:Flora video

Tue, Jan 29 2013 19:49:25 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

This video showcases a new flora creation engine for 3DS MAX called Creation:Flora.

CryEngine 3 presentation video

Tue, Jan 29 2013 3:47:42 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under videos

In this video, Sean Tracy from Crytek, shows up some of the features of CryEngine 3 and how they can be customized for various needs.

Luminous Studio hair

Mon, Jan 28 2013 9:39:41 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

This video shows some of the hair simulations available in Luminous Studio, the new engine from Square Enix.

DarkBrain interview

Sun, Jan 27 2013 11:43:39 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Andrew from DarkBrain.com, a comic studio and subscription site featuring adult comics.

Can you introduce yourself and tell us a bit about your background?

Hi there. My name is Andrew Zar and I created a comic studio called DarkBrain.com. Our goal is to publish adult comics with both titillating art and enthralling stories.

I have been a longtime fan of sequential art and find it one of the best forms of storytelling. But, I drifted away from mainstream comics in the 1980s as I grew out of my teens, and comics didn't follow suit. I found more interesting work in novels, movies and even video games. When I decided to create DarkBrain, I wanted to make comics *I* would enjoy. I also had many stories in my brain for nearly two decades – in a way, they haunted me. So trotting them out to see the light of day was a true treat.

What is DarkBrain and how much content can we find there?

I started building the studio in 2009 and we opened in 2010. To date, we have produced a staggering 2,800 full color pages of material – and by the end of 2013 that will explode to 4,700 pages! Many of our titles also include music and voice-over narration in a unique interactive comic format I created. But we also offer digital download editions that work on any computer or tablet device.

What made you decide to do an adult comic site?

One of my original design goals for the site was to produce the same content with the user ability to select content level. Users could basically choose R or PG-13 or PG and see the same stories. The software I wrote for that worked great, but it turns out the idea didn't work so well. The industry just is not ready to look at any properties without a single, all-encompassing category. You are either adult, or you are not.

But, even worse, the comic industry has no equivalent to "R-rated" movies. All mainstream comics are PG rated (even "mature" labels means slightly PG-13 – but barely). After really struggling with trying to forge an R-rated market, DarkBrain finally had to make the critical choice – either go PG or go XXX. When faced with that, I knew I would lose interest in the project if it were PG, so I went into uncensored territory.

I kept my goal the same – it would be the same stories, the same craftsmanship – but just with more explicit art. I found that once I took the shackles off, I really enjoyed this change. I learned that even I had a lot of "self-censorship" in play that got wiped off when I went for truly unrestricted.

How many artists do you have work for the site, do you mostly use freelancers or in-house staff?

DarkBrain staff is 100% freelance and I have hired over 150 artists since 2009. Our current crew has settled in with about 20 staff members. When I started the project I did a lot of recruiting. Now that we are well known, I generally pick new staff from email inquiries.

You have both free and paid content, how did you decide on the subscription model?

DarkBrain has been a wonderful learning experience. We originally started with all content free, but then a pay system to get the "uncensored" content. This worked well to draw a lot of interest; there was a time DarkBrain was pulling over a million hits a day. But I learned it was challenging to convert interest to sales.

So we have changed our model. The new model is more in line with how other independent comic studios work: we offer the first issue free -- then it is paid after that. This allows people to really try us out and see what they think before committing.

For how to pay, we offer per-issue sales that are usually $1.99 per 50 page issue – but our more popular offering is our all-inclusive membership. It allows complete access to our nearly 3,000 pages of material for only $45 as well as a full year of new content monthly. I also believe that the membership offers more quality exposure to our comics since members can read them all.

Can you tell us a bit of what goes on behind the scenes, the software and servers you use?

I built the entire site code that runs DarkBrain in ASP.NET and XML due to my extensive experience with that in my "real life." For content creation I use Adobe Photoshop for image manipulation and Adobe Illustrator for lettering. For new startups, my advice is to try Manga Studio as it is considerably cheaper than Adobe and I had committed to Adobe mostly because I use Adobe Flash and Adobe SoundBooth for the animated comics.

What has the feedback been so far, and how successful do you consider DarkBrain to be?

We have had many great reviews, tons of comments posted, lots of emails – a considerable amount of feedback that runs the range of "amazing" to "oh my god, too much sex you pervert!" Even the negative feedback I have relished – because that offers the ability to learn something.

Success can be measured many ways. DarkBrain has succeeded in bringing all my dark dreams, nightmares, fantasies and more into the light. The Mirror/Mirror storyline is one that had written itself into my brain and when that story was done, I have never felt as satisfied. I had similar experiences with all the stories – Grace Comes Home was written with my wife in mind, her strength and resilience – and it was a true pleasure to have her participate as Grace's actual voice and to see the joy on her face to have been part of the artistic experience was beyond measure for me.

Financial success is a different sort of thing, and what most people would value a business on. That measure is really told only by one truth: as long as DarkBrain keeps producing comics, it is successful. This is my only true financial goal: to create a self-sustaining comic site that lasts forever. And that is a goal I work on every year.

For new startups, I will offer an important bit of advice: the only good reason to produce a comic is because you MUST do it. It is not an easy career, and it is not my career (I'm a computer techie). But, on the other hand, if you have that relentless story in your psyche, the one that must be told, then by all means: TELL IT!

Can you give any tips for people who may wish to start their own subscription site?

Subscription sites require a lot of content. So any new site needs to map out their content plan for several years and have a reliable production process. DarkBrain in early 2013 has artists working on mid 2014 content already – actually drawing the books – that is how far ahead I need to be. Because, if you run a subscription site and run up on a deadline, it is a truly dreadful experience that can ruin everything you have built. So plan ahead, get your funding organized, and be ready to make it work – no matter how hard.

But, I want to point out that new studios can start a lot smaller. Instead of a subscription model, I'd suggest a per-issue model using a partner like DriveThruComics. (If you make censored PG-level content, you can also try Comixology). And then you can create your own site and link off for each issue. It is a much lower barrier of entry and I highly recommend it. Then, as you grow, you can consider adding a subscription service later on when you have enough content.

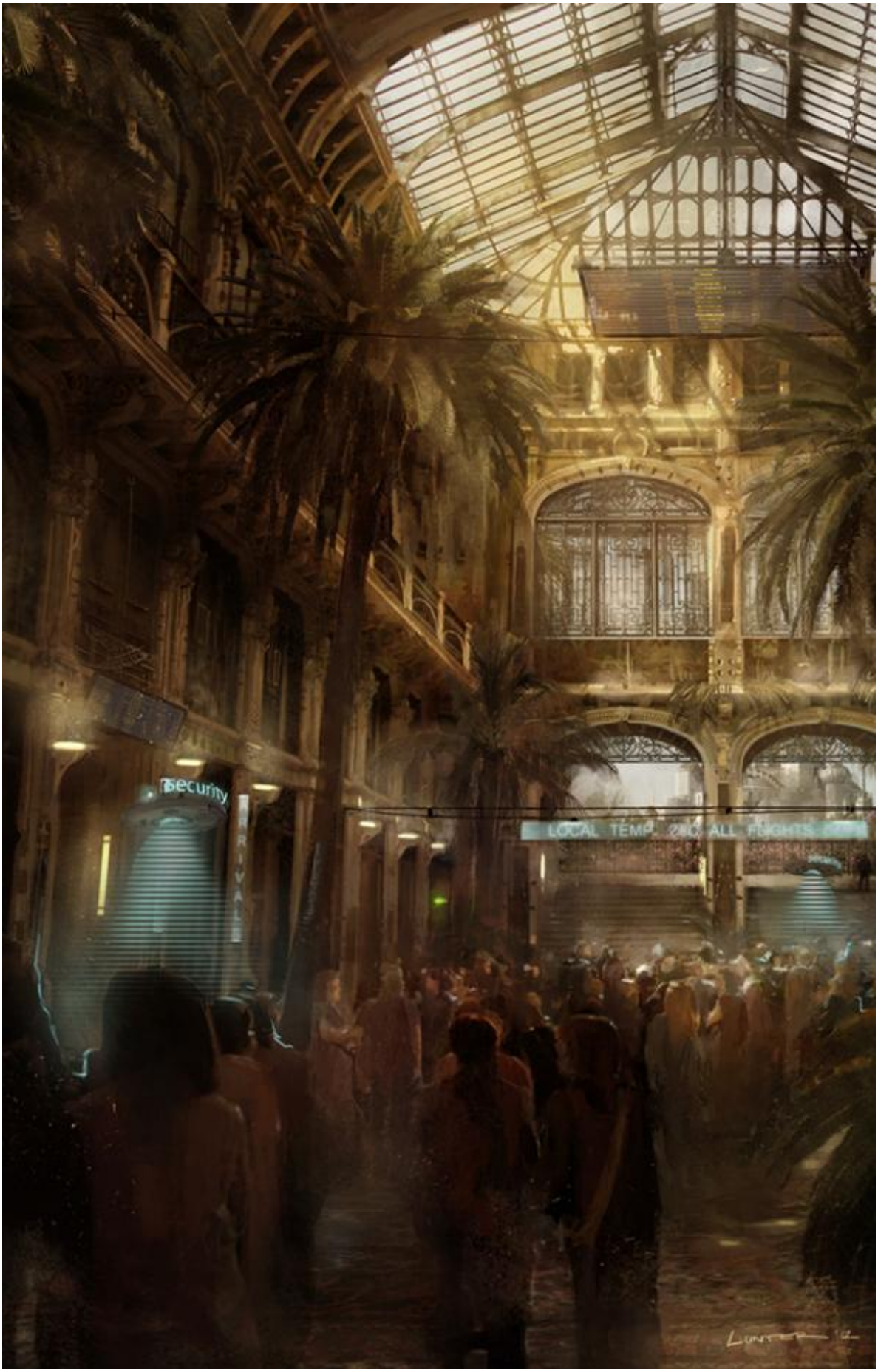
What can we expect in the future for DarkBrain and some of the upcoming comics?

In 2013 DarkBrain finishes up some comic series such as Locked Out, God Play and Columbia's Underbelly. Then we start some exciting new titles including Mirror/Mirror REBIRTH, an edgy horror story that brings back our popular haunted dominatrix Brenna and Envoy 82, a sexy sci-fi drama that tracks a human crew sent to negotiate with an alien race to avoid a catastrophic war. And be sure to grab the first issue of Envoy 82, which will be FREE!

Artist showcase: TitusLunter

Sat, Jan 26 2013 8:20:23 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature the art of TitusLunter, a concept artist from the Netherlands.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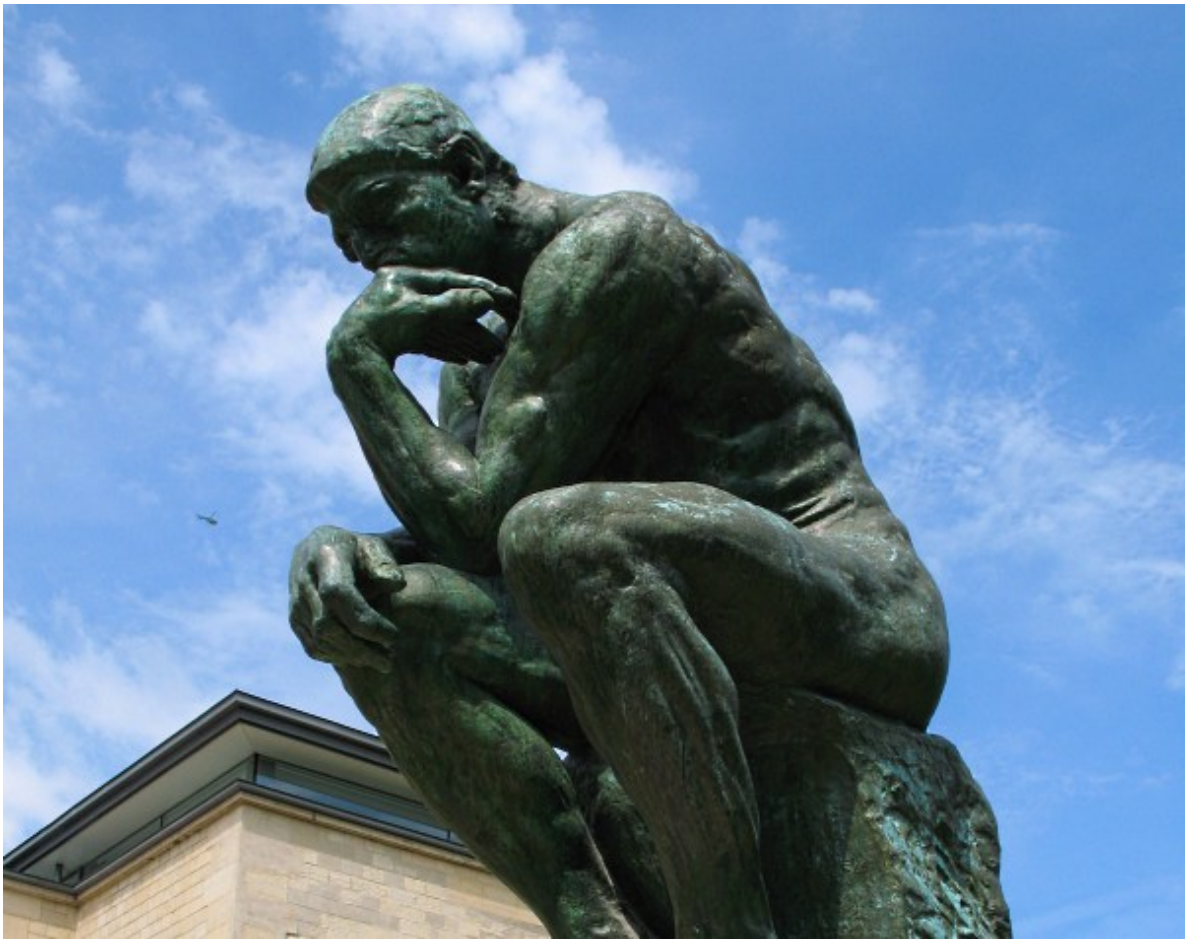
SECTOR 14 HEAVENLY HAVEN
YAMADRA

10 tips to avoid procrastination

Fri, Jan 25 2013 21:35:21 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Whether you're a web designer, 3D artist, or even an accountant, everyone suffers from procrastination. For some, it may be a minor annoyance, something we rarely face, but for others, actually starting work may be a difficult challenge, and procrastination might well make us lose hours every day due to inactivity. If that's your case, this could be a productivity nightmare, with hundreds of hours or full weeks being lost every year due to this behavior.



There are many studies that try to point out the cause and reasons for procrastination. Usually, stress plays a role, where your mind may simply not want to face a particular task, and so you wait and do something else instead, usually unproductive, in the hope that this task will be less bothersome later on. Of course, it never is, but that doesn't prevent us from repeating the action constantly. While the exact cause may be hard to find out, there are things you can do to avoid delaying tasks, and gain back all of those lost hours.

1. Avoid distractions

It may seem like common sense to turn off the TV, close your web browser, and put down your phone when you have some work to do, but for many people this is much harder than it may look. We all know what usually distracts us, and what else we do when we should be working. You may have a client that needs you to finish a piece of work, but you procrastinate and wait until the last moment by instead checking your email, browsing Reddit, or sending some text messages. Those distractions you tend to go to are the first that should be turned off and put away.

2. Listen to music

While most distractions are bad for someone who tends to procrastinate, soothing music can actually be very good. Because stress is often a factor that makes us delay tasks that we don't want to do, listening to music can help calm us down, and focus our attention on the task at hand. You have to be careful however to stick to calm melodies, and not simply launch your Hip Hop playlist if you know it's going to distract you.

3. Be disciplined with your common tasks

Email is a task that has become very common for many of us. You may talk to work colleagues, clients, friends and family through the same email interface, and you can't just close the tab, you need to stay up to date on any potential request. This is why being disciplined about your inbox usage is crucial. Make use of folders or labels so that your work messages are shown right away, but the mail from your friends and family are stored for when you're done. The same is true with IM or SMS. If you really need to receive direct communications while you work, you need to discipline yourself and set a maximum amount of time for each interruption, like 10 seconds, and then back to work.

4. Try to multitask less

We love that our computers can multitask, and as human beings, being able to do the same, juggling between our emails, browser, productivity software and music player may seem like a great feat, but it is also very distracting and slows each of these tasks down. If you have 5 windows open and you multitask between them, the one that contains your work may only receive 1/5th of your attention. Instead, closing down the other 4 and focusing on just the one task at hand will speed things up by a lot.

5. Use a to-do list

Don't rely on your memory to remember everything you have to do, instead use a to-do solution with reminders, so that you don't have to spend time trying to remember what you were supposed to do, when each task is due, and having to go back to past conversations trying to find the answer. There are many to-do lists out there, some web based, others are desktop applications or phone apps. The important thing however is that the to-do solution that you pick must have reminders, so that it doesn't become yet another distraction

6. Start working even if you have a blank

For many, procrastination isn't so much that they get distracted by another app, but instead they are staring at exactly the task that they should be doing, but they simply don't have any inspiration at that time. So the solution many reach is to put the task off for a while and come back later. Instead, start working anyways, do something, anything, and often you will find that inspiration will come.

7. Have regular breaks and get enough sleep

Working is always harder when you get tired, so having regular breaks and sleeping enough at night is key. You should never work for more than a few hours without taking a break. Ideally, at the top of every hour you should get up from your desk and walk around for a few minutes, clear your mind, then come back to work. Note that the point of these breaks is to increase blood flow and relax your brain, not start something else. You should never give in to the temptation to check your phone, turn on the TV or do something else.

8. Eat well

Just like the lack of sleep can increase procrastination, so can the lack of food. Be sure that you eat healthy and have eaten enough before you start working. Avoid trying to eat and work at the same time. While eating pizza in the conference room while brainstorming ideas is a fairly common practice, when you are alone at your desk, trying to actually do a task that requires your attention, eating at the same time can be just as distracting as having the TV on.

9. Create a sense of urgency

Often, procrastination is enabled by having long deadlines. If something is due for a client in a week, and you know it will take you less than a day to do it, then it can be tempting to wait until the very last day. But you never know what other task will come your way. Think of what would happen if your most important client came up with a new urgent task on that last day, or what if your office suddenly burned down and you had to scramble a new work location, what would it do to your professional image if you were late. By always working as if each task had to be completely as soon as possible instead of by a certain due date, you can help reduce the amount of wait that you allow yourself.

10. Break large tasks into smaller ones

Another reason procrastination happens is when a project seems so big, so monumental, that simply starting it can appear daunting. This is why it can be very useful to break down large tasks into smaller ones. For example, if you are a writer and need to write 200 pages about a subject, the amount of work ahead of you may seem quite big. So instead, divide that project into chapters, and place each of them on your to-do list as different tasks, with the amount of time each should take. Then you can start working on the first one without worrying so much about the full project.

Krakatoa 2.1.7 released

Fri, Jan 25 2013 20:15:33 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Thinkbox Software has released Krakatoa MX 2.1.7, their latest public beta of the particle simulation

software for 3DS MAX. It is available for download in evaluation mode.

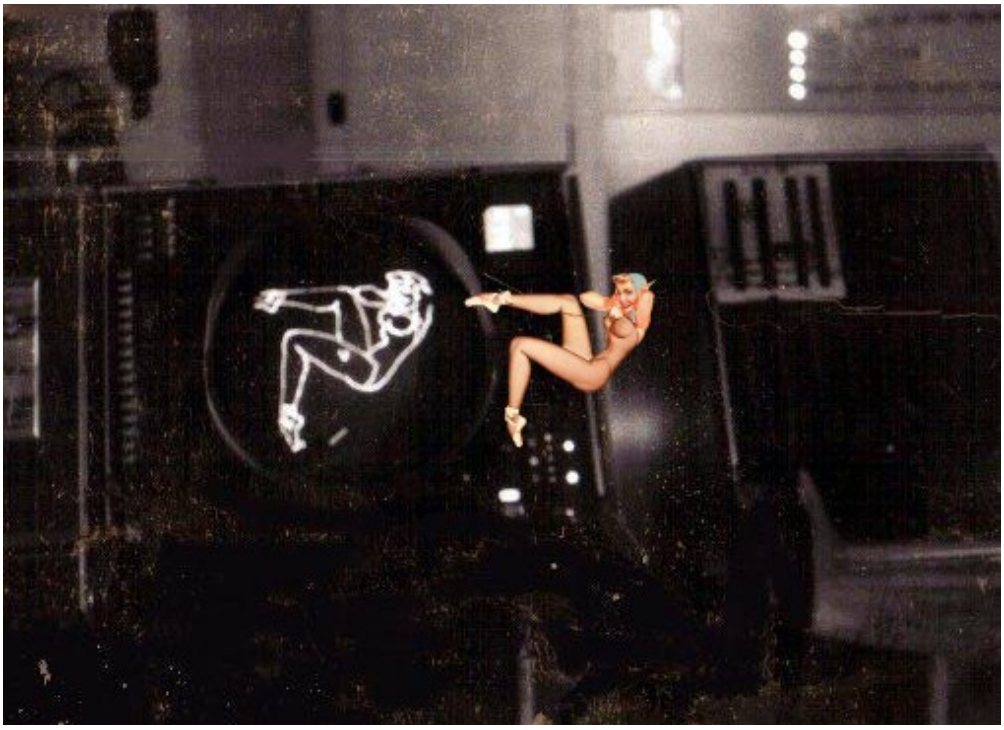
Some of the new features in this version include:

* A new PRT Surface object has been introduced.
* A new mode has been added to the existing Krakatoa PRTCloner Modifier.
* Magma Errors are now considered fatal and will stop the rendering with an error message dialog.
* Added Decimal Precision controls to the Particle Data Viewer.
* The Magma Output channel format will be forced to the type (16 or 32 bit) specified in the Krakatoa Memory Channels Rollout when rendering in Krakatoa.
* The Source Particles section of the Main Controls rollout has been extended to a 4x4 grid and now hosts additional checkbuttons for PRT Surface, PRT Ember, a separate Phoenix option (which used to be shared with FumeFX), and more for future use.
* The VFB Extensions have also been updated to show all source types on 16 checkbuttons in 4 groups of 4 in two rows.
* Support for the new source types has been added to the Schematic Flow tool.
* Improved the class filters of the Magma (KCM) and Krakatoa Delete modifier MacroScripts.
* An ActiveType Tool has been added to the Magma Editor.
* Added ''FaceSelection'' channel to the list of pre-defined FaceQuery node channels. Previously, it had to be entered manually.
* Added Debugger Decimal Precision data display controls. In addition to the old defaults, floating point values can now be shown with 8, 12 or 16 decimal places.
* When defining the Output node's data format, the memory channel format (16 or 32) defined in the Krakatoa's Memory Channels rollout will be used and the other options will be hidden. This does not affect channels that are not cacheable by the renderer.

First ever digital artwork uncovered

Fri, Jan 25 2013 10:22:08 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The Atlantic has recovered the never before told story of how the very first digital artwork came to be, in US Air Force base Ft. Lee.



In what is believed to be the very first time a digital image was produced on a display created to track missiles and enemy airplanes, a picture taken in 1959 shows what one enterprising programmer decided to do during his break time. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he chose to draw the pin-up portrait of a woman, more precisely an image found in Esquire magazine.

The SAGE computer used to create it cost $238 million, and could very well be the initial birth of computer graphics.

J.J. Abrams next Star Wars director (updated)

Fri, Jan 25 2013 4:24:54 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Back in October, Disney buying Lucasfilm was big news, and since then people have been busy speculating on who would be directing the upcoming Star Wars VII feature film. Now, The Hollywood Reporter reports that insider sources confirmed J.J. Abrams is negotiating to direct the production.

Back in December, some comments from Abrams made it sound like he would not be the man picked, but now this newest rumor seems much more solid, and has been picked up by sites across the web. Meanwhile, questions arise as to what will happen to Star Trek 3, which Abrams is also set to work on. Perhaps he will take a back seat on that one, staying only as executive producer.

The upcoming Star Wars movie is already being written by Michael Arndt.

Update: Lucasfilm confirmed the story.

John Carmack about ray tracing

Thu, Jan 24 2013 16:17:25 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under news

John Carmack, known games developer legend, wrote a comment this week on an Ars Technica article to help fellow game designers understand some of the differences and benefits of using ray tracing versus rasterization.

In his post, he touched briefly on the benefits of ray tracing accelerated hardware, such as accurate reflections and shadows, but that classic Whitted ray tracing is significantly inferior to modern rasterization engines for the vast majority of scenes that people care about.

Foundry announces HieroPlayer

Thu, Jan 24 2013 0:18:27 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Foundry, well known by VFX artists for their Nuke application, has published a video about HieroPlayer, a new tool for visual artists.

11th VES award nominees announced

Wed, Jan 23 2013 23:51:43 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

The Visual Effects Society (VES) announced its nominations for the upcoming 11th annual VES show. These awards focus on 24 categories in order to reward movies, video games, animations and commercials who show highly acclaimed visual effects. These awards will take place in a ceremony on Feb 5 at the Beverly Hilton Hotel.

Here is a full list of the nominees:

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Visual Effects-Driven Feature Motion Picture

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey
Joe Letteri
Eileen Moran
Eric Saindon
Kevin L. Sherwood

Prometheus
Paul Butterworth
Charley Henley
Allen Maris
Richard Stammers

Life of Pi
Donald R. Elliott
Susan MacLeod
Guillaume Rocheron
Bill Westenhofer

The Avengers
Susan Pickett
Janek Sirrs
Jeff White
Guy Williams

Battleship
Grady Cofer
Pablo Helman
Kevin Elam
Glen McIntosh

Outstanding Supporting Visual Effects in a Feature Motion Picture

Rust and Bone
Béatrice Bauwens
Cédric Fayolle
Nicolas Rey
Stéphane Thibert

The Impossible
Felix Bergés
Sandra Hermida
Pau Costa Moeller

Argo
Matt Dessero
Gregory McMurry
Tom Smith
Michele Vallillo

Flight
Kevin Baillie
Michael Lantieri
Chris Stoski
Ryan Tudhope

Zero Dark Thirty
Geoff Anderson
Chris Harvey
Jeremy Hattingh
Richard Stutsman

Outstanding Animation in an Animated Feature Motion Picture

Brave
Mark Andrews
Steve May
Katherine Sarafian
Bill Wise

ParaNorman
Chris Butler
Sam Fell
Travis Knight
Brad Schiff

Rise of the Guardians
Nancy Bernstein
David Prescott
Peter Ramsey
Christina Steinberg

Wreck-It Ralph
Sean Jenkins
Scott Kersavage
Rich Moore
Clark Spencer

Hotel Transylvania
Lydia Bottegoni
James Crossley
Mike Ford
Daniel Kramer

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Broadcast Program

Game of Thrones: Volar Morghulis
Rainer Gombos
Steve Kullback
Sven Martin
Juri Stanossek

Once Upon A Time: The Stranger
Dale Fay
Laura Jones
Nathan Matsuda
Andrew Orloff

Falling Skies: Worlds Apart
James Hattin
Suzanne MacLennan
Curt Miller
Andrew Orloff

Curiosity: Battlefield Cell
Nathan Larouche
Lon Molnar
Geoff Scott
Bojan Zoric

Munsters: Mockingbird Lane
Leslie Ekker
Jonah Hall
Livia Hanich
Jason Zimmerman

Outstanding Supporting Visual Effects in a Broadcast Program

Hemingway & Gellhorn
Nathan Abbot
Kip Larsen
Chris Morley
Christopher Paizis

Boardwalk Empire: Episode 308
John Bair
Parker Chehak
Paul Graff
Lesley Robson-Foster

Men Who Built America: Episode 2
Glenn Allen
Matthew Conner
Eran Dinur
David Reynolds

Hell On Wheels: Blood Moon
Matt Von Brock
Jason Fotter
Tim Jacobsen
Bill Kent

Hawaii Five-O: La O Na Makuahine
Gevork Babityan
Jon Howard
Armen Kevorkian
Ricardo Ramirez

Outstanding Real-Time Visuals in a Video Game

Call of Duty: Black Ops II
Jason Blundell
Barry Whitney
Colin Whitney

Halo 4
Mike Cronin
Brien Goodrich
Kenneth Scott
Jon Wood

Dirt Showdown
Peter Asberg
Peter Clark
Nathan Fisher
Julie McGurren

Forza Horizon
Michel Bastien
Terrance Newell
Gareth Richards
Andrew Sage

Dishonored
Viktor Antonov
Sebastien Mitton
Jean-Luc Monnet
Julien Roby

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Commercial

Pepsi: Crowd Surfing
Martin Aufinger
Russell Dodgson
Abby Orchard
Chris Redding

Nike: Biomorph

Rafael Colon
Aladino Debert
David Liu
Nicola Wiseman

Lady Gaga: Fame
Kait Boehm
Juan Gomez
Kurt Lawson
Greg Teegarden

Norfolk Southern: City of Possibilities
Chris Bernier
Kyle Cody
Jeff Lopez
Boo Wong

Call of Duty: Surprise
Steve Beck
Chris Knight
Robert Sethi
Christina Thompson

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Special Venue Project

Despicable Me: Minion Mayhem
Heather Drummons
Joel Friesch
Brooke Breton
Chris Bailey

SeaWorld: Turtle Trek 3D/ 360
Timur ''Taron'' Baysal
Jae Cheol Hong
Cecil Magpuri
Michael Roderick

Earthquake: Evidence of a Restless Planet
Matthew Blackwell
Tom Kennedy
Jeroen Lapré
Mike Schmitt

The Ball Unleashed
Gianni Aliotti
Lisa Zusmer DelPrete
Marc Dominic Rienzo
Eric Sanford

Outstanding Animated Character in a Live Action Feature Motion Picture

The Hobbit: Goblin King
Jung Min Chan
James Jacobs
David Clayton
Guillaume Francois

The Hobbit: Gollum
Gino Acevedo
Alessandro Bonora
Jeff Capogreco
Kevin Estey

The Avengers: The Hulk

Marc Chu
John Doublestein
Cyrus Jam
Jason Smith

Life of Pi: Richard Parker
Erik De Boer
Sean Comer
Betsy Asher Hall
Kai-Hua Lan

Outstanding Animated Character in an Animated Feature Motion Picture

Brave: Merida
Travis Hathaway
Olivier Soares
Peter Sumanaseni
Brian Tindall

Hotel Transylvania: Dracula
Bill Haller
Tim Pixton
Jorge Vigara

Wreck-It Ralph: Vanellope
John Kahwaty
Suzan Kim
Michelle Robinson
Tony Smeed

The Pirates: Band of Misfits
Will Becher
Jay Grace
Loyd Price

Outstanding Animated Character in a Commercial or Broadcast Program

Ted: Jimmy Kimmel Live!
James W. Brown
Brad Fox
Ross Nakamura
Jeffrey Woo

Sinbad: Episode 1
Andy Guest
James Moxon
James Reid
Greg Spencer

Hallmark: Motherbird
Vince Baertsoen
Kevin Ives
Laurent Makowski
Joshua Merck

Game of Thrones: Training the Dragons
Irfan Celik
Florian Friedmann
Ingo Schachner
Chris Stenner

Outstanding Created Environment in a Live Action Feature Motion Picture

The Hobbit: Goblin Caverns
Ryan Arcus
Simon Jung
Alastair Maher
Anthony M. Patti

Prometheus: LV-233
Julien Bolbach
Marco Genovesi
Martin Riedel
Marco Rolandi

The Avengers: Midtown Manhattan
Richard Bluff
Barry Williams
David Meny
Andy Proctor

Life of Pi: Open Ocean
Jason Bayever
Sho Hasegawa
Jimmy Jewell
Walt Jones

Outstanding Created Environment in an Animated Feature Motion Picture

Brave: The Forest
Tim Best
Steve Pilcher
Inigo Quilez
Andrew Whittock

ParaNorman: Graveyard
Phil Brotherton
Robert Desue
Oliver Jones
Nick Mariana

ParaNorman: Main Street
Alice Bird
Matt Delue
Caitlin Pashalek

Rise of the Guardians: The North Pole
Eric Bouffard
Sonja Burchard
Andy Harbeck
Peter Maynez

Outstanding Created Environment in a Commercial or Broadcast Program

Sinbad
James Moxon
Lyndall Spagnoletti
Greg Spencer
Simon Wicker

Game of Thrones: Pyke
Rene Borst
Thilo Ewers
Adam Figielski
Jonas Stuckenbrock

Call of Duty: Eclipse - Surprise

Chris Bayol
Steve Beck
Gawain Liddiard
Robert Sethi

5 Gum RPM: Choose Your Energy
Kaan Atilla
Kevin Gillen
Isaac Irvin
Brandon Lester

Outstanding Virtual Cinematography in a Live Action Feature Motion Picture

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey
Matt Aitken
Victor Huang
Christian Rivers
R. Christopher White

The Avengers: Downtown Manhattan
Colin Benoit
Jeremy Goldman
Tory Mercer
Roger Liu

Total Recall: Hover Car Chase
Daniel Baldwin
Mattias Forsstrom
Sam Schwier
Joshua Wassung

The Amazing Spider-Man
Rob Engle
David Schaub
Cosku Turhan
Max Tyrie

Outstanding Virtual Cinematography in a Commercial or Broadcast Program

Toyota: Real Deal
Adam Berg
Niles Heckman
Ronald Herbst
Vernon Wilbert

Halo 4: Forward Unto Dawn
Steven Chen
Phil Dakin
Paul Stodolny

Call of Duty: Eclipse - Surprise
Chris Bayol
Steve Beck
Chris Knight
Robert Sethi

ZombiU
Dominique Boidin
Léon Bérelle
Rémi Kozyra
Maxime Luère

Outstanding Models in a Feature Motion Picture

The Avengers: Helicarrier
Rene Garcia
Bruce Holcomb
Polly Ing
Aaron Wilson

The Impossible: Orchid Hotel
Markus Donhauser
Patrick Lehn
Angel Martinez
Juergen Pirman

Men in Black 3: Cape Canaveral/ Apollo Launch
Craig Feifarek
Hee-Chel Nam
Eric Neill
Taehyun Park

The Dark Knight Rises: Airplane Heist
Scott Beverly
Alan Faucher
Ian Hunter
Steve Newburn

Outstanding FX and Simulation Animation in a Live Action Feature Motion Picture

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey
Areito Echevarria
Chet Leavai
Garry Runke
Francois Sugny

Life of Pi: Storm of God
Harry Mukhopadhyay
David Stopford
Mark Williams
Derek Wolfe

Battleship
Florent Andorra
Willi Geiger
Rick Hankins
Florian Witzel

Life of Pi: Ocean
Jason Bayever
David Horsley
Scott Townsend
Miles Vignol

Outstanding FX and Simulation Animation in an Animated Feature Motion Picture

Brave
Chris Chapman
Dave Hale
Michael K. O'Brien
Bill Watral

ParaNorman: Practical Volumetrics
Aidan Fraser
Joe Gorski
Eric Kuehne
Andrew Nawrot

ParaNorman: Angry Aggie Ink-Blot Electricity
Michael Cordova
Grant Laker
Susanna Luck
Peter Vickery

Rise of the Guardians: Last Stand
Andy Hayes
Carl Hooper
Andrew Wheeler
Stephen Wood

Outstanding FX and Simulation Animation in a Commercial or Broadcast Program

Nike: Biomorph
Aladino Debert
Eric Ebling
Ken Mitchel Jones
Jason Mortimer

Last Resort: Captain
Matt Von Brock
Bruce Coy
Junaid Farooq
Aldo Ruggiero

Guinness: Cloud
Tom Bussell
Neil Davies

Nissan Altima: Wouldn't it be Cool
Tim Borgmann
David Forcada
Aron Hjartarson
Shayne Ryan

Outstanding Compositing in a Feature Motion Picture

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey
Jean-Luc Azzis
Steven McGillen
Christoph Salzmann
Charles Tait

Life of Pi: Storm of God
Ryan Clarke
Jose Fernandez
Sean Oharas
Hamish Schumacher

The Avengers: Hulk Punch
Chris Balog
Peter Demarest
Nelson Sepulveda
Alan Travis

Prometheus: Engineers & the Orrery
Xavier Bourque
Sam Cole
Simone Riginelli
Denis Scolan

Outstanding Compositing in a Broadcast Program

Hemingway & Gellhorn
Nathan Abbot
Shelley Campbell
Chris Morley
Christopher Paizis

Last Resort: Captain
Matt Von Brock
Jason Fotter
Aldo Ruggiero
Brian Williams

Game of Thrones: White Walker Army
Falk Boje
Esther Engel
Alexey Kuchinsky
Klaus Wuchta

Hell On Wheels: Blood Moon
Antonio Chang
Jason Fotter
Eric Hayden
Josh Miyaji

Outstanding Compositing in a Commercial

Chevy 2012 Silverado
Dominik Bauch
Nicholas Kim
Benjamin Walsh

Norfolk Southern: City of Possibilities
Tom Bardwell
Chris Bernier
Kyle Cody
Erin Nash

Call of Duty: Eclipse - Surprise
Chris Knight
Becky Porter
Jake Maymudes
Tayler Smith

Nike: Game On, World
Daniel Marsh
Paul O'Shea

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Student Project

Voile Noir
Michael Balthazart
Raphaël Gaudin
Clément Granjon De Lepiney
Quentin Sauvinet

Globosome
Sascha Geddert
Johannes Peter
Patrick Schuler
Philipp Wolf

Rollin' Safari

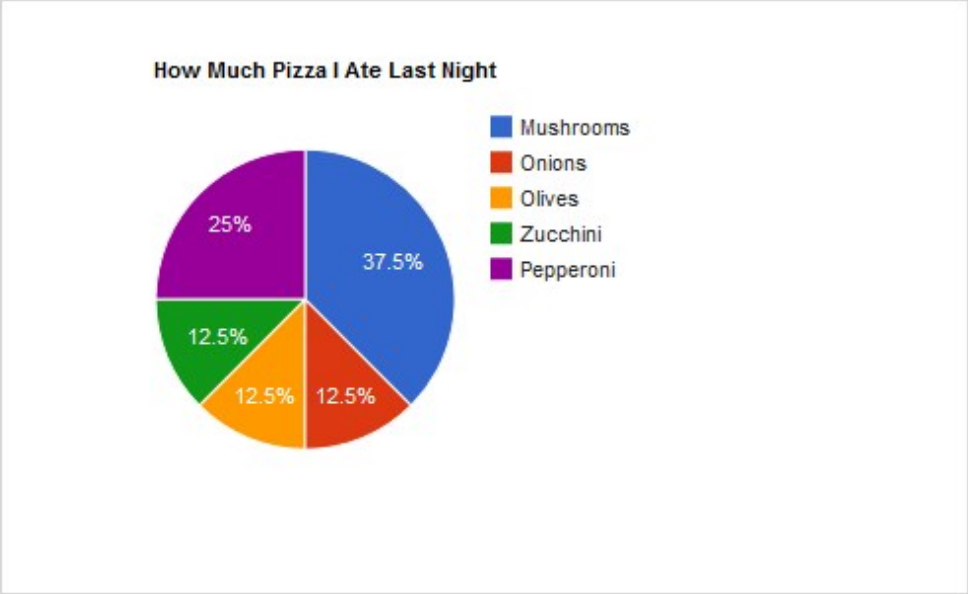
Kyra Buschor
Anna Habermehl
Constantin Päplow
Thomas Hartmann

Natalis
Daniel Brkovic
David Kirchner
Jan-Marcel Kuehn
Tom Ferstl

Making graphs with Google Charts

Wed, Jan 23 2013 19:45:37 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

A lot of designers out there work with data. With *big data* becoming all the rage, managers, advertisers and others struggle to deal with a large amount of data, and what often happens is that data analysts need those designers to create good, visually pleasing presentations that illustrate their points. Sometimes this is done in a word processor or spreadsheet, but often this is for web sites or online work, and you may need to quickly create graphs, pie charts or other types of visual cues that illustrate a mountain of data. If you know a bit of HTML and JavaScript, one interesting tool you should know about is Google Charts. Here, we'll go over how to use this service to easily create visually pleasing charts and graphs.



Google Charts is a service available from the Google site for anyone to use. You don't need to subscribe or to authenticate yourself, and it doesn't matter where your data comes from. Often, you will have access to a database filled with data, or it could be in a CSV file, or even from a remote URL. Your job as a designer will likely be to take this raw data, and create a nice looking chart or graph. The first thing to do is to go through the many available graph types and pick the one you want between the pie, line or bar chart.

Once that's done, you can go to the corresponding documentation page to see examples of code and a list of all the options available to you. This is the code that you need to put in your HTML file in order to load the Google Chart tools:

```
<script type='text/javascript' src='https://www.google.com/jsapi'></script>
```

Once that's done, you can start writing your JavaScript code inside of a *script* area. The process is usually always the same. First, you load the right type of chart, then you create an array containing your data, you set the options you want for your graphic, and finally you draw it. The way drawing is done simply means that the code will draw the chart inside of a *div* that is present on that page. Here is a simple example to draw the pie chart shown above:

```
google.load('visualization', '1.0', {'packages':['corechart']});
google.setOnLoadCallback(drawChart);
function drawChart()
```

```
{
var data = new google.visualization.DataTable();
data.addColumn('string', 'Topping');
data.addColumn('number', 'Slices');
data.addRows([
['Mushrooms', 3],
['Onions', 1],
['Olives', 1],
['Zucchini', 1],
['Pepperoni', 2]
]);
var options = {'title':'How Much Pizza I Ate Last Night', 'width':400, 'height':300};
var chart = new google.visualization.PieChart(document.getElementById('chart_div'));
chart.draw(data, options);
}
```

This code follows the steps specified above, and if you know JavaScript you can easily go through it and see what the steps are. Basically, to adapt it to your needs, you simply have to change what the data is inside of the *addRows* section, and change the labels in the *addColumns* section. Finally, once that code is done, you simply need to add the proper *div*, the container that will contain the actual chart, wherever you need it inside of your page:

```
<div id='chart_div'></div>
```

This was a very simple example of how to create a pie chart using Google Charts, but this system is very powerful, and once you get used to working with it, you will find out that you have a lot of options available to you. If you need to create interactive sites, blog posts, presentations, flyers, and so on, you may find out that having well done charts and graphs may bring your point across much easier than simple numbers.

Trizz fluids video

Wed, Jan 23 2013 0:46:47 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video made for the brand Renuage, Trizz created some very impressive fluids in 3D, entirely made of CGI.

Character creation guides from Valve

Wed, Jan 23 2013 0:05:43 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Valve, the creators of the latest DOTA 2 game, published a series of PDF documents that describe some of the core concepts an artist should know in order to design characters or other assets for the game. However, these can be very useful for any 3D designer who wants to learn about some of the requirements and tricks to make game elements look good.

The guides are available on the DOTA site at these links:

* Dota 2 Character Art Guide (PDF)

* Dota 2 Character Texture Guide (PDF)
* Shader Masks Guide (PDF)

Element 3D 1.5 features video

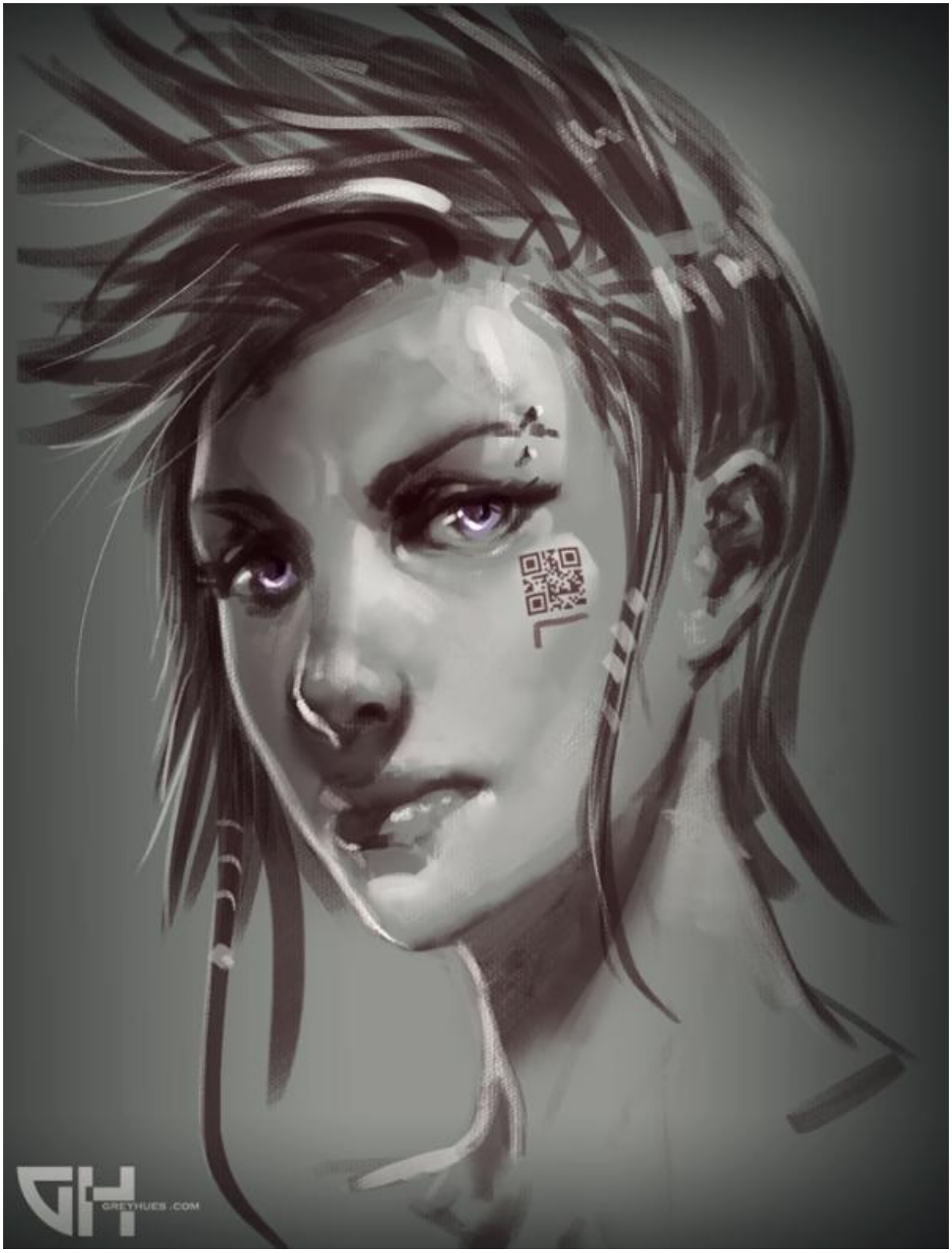
Tue, Jan 22 2013 23:35:44 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The folks over at Video Copilot show us the latest features available in Element 3D version 1.5.

Artist showcase: GreyHues

Sun, Jan 20 2013 20:48:38 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature the art of Vadim Marchenkov, also known as GreyHues.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Battleship water simulations

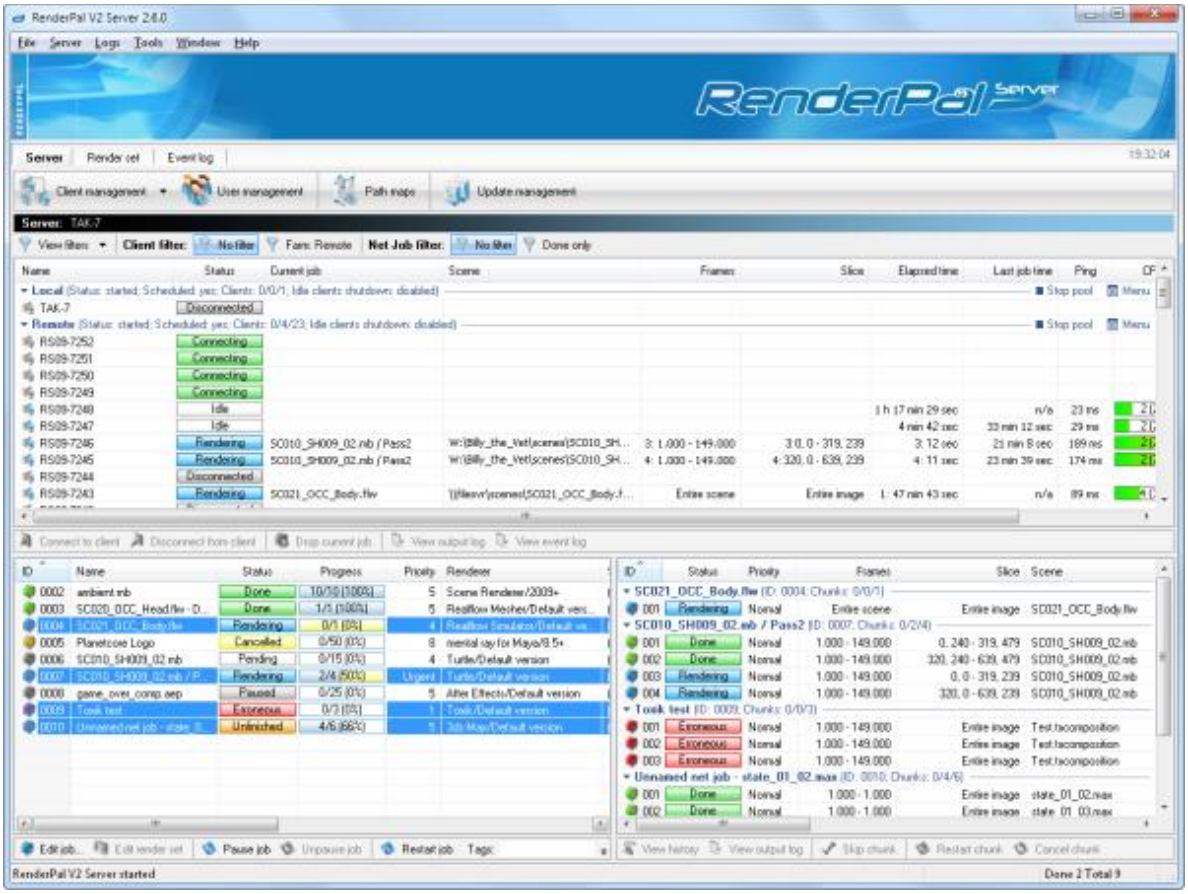
Sun, Jan 20 2013 19:37:53 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video, the team from ILM explains how they did the water simulations for the movie Battleship.

RenderPal interview

Sat, Jan 19 2013 20:57:30 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Daniel Müller of RenderPal, an application allowing 3D artists to manage large rendering farms.



Can you describe yourself and your background?

My name is Daniel Müller, and I am the lead developer behind RenderPal. I live in a small town in Germany and have been programming for more than 17 years. While I have no background in the arts industry, I learned quite a lot about rendering through the development of RenderPal: One day, a friend of mine (a 3D artist) came to me asking for a small favor: He needed a simple tool to batch-render Maya scenes - and so RenderPal was born. It all started as a small, private tool, but eventually grew into what it is now during the past 12 years.

What is RenderPal and some of the main features it offers?

RenderPal - in its current incarnation called RenderPal V2 - is a professional render farm manager. Simply said, RenderPal takes care of your entire render farm, and the users (usually artists) only need to submit their jobs and take a look at what is going on from time to time. This is achieved through various components: The RenderPal V2 Server, which is the ''main workhorse'' handling all the rendering machines and dispatching the jobs to them; then there are the various RenderPal V2 Client instances, which run on the rendering machines; last but not least, the users use either the RenderPal V2 Remote Controller or the its Web Interface to remotely deal with their render farm.

One of the outstanding features of RenderPal is its extremely advanced renderer system: A render farm manager relies on how it can support the various renderers and compositing tools out there, and RenderPal offers one of the most advanced systems in such a program - and yet it is easy to use, even for artists without any programming background.

A key feature of any render farm manager is how much ''automatic everything, please'' you can get. RenderPal offers quite a lot of such features: These allow the users to fine-tune how their jobs should be rendered and monitored, when they should be resubmitted automatically, it can check for missing images and much more. The whole idea behind RenderPal is to liberate the users from manually taking care of their renderings, and RenderPal does a very good job at this.

The latest version adds a web interface, can you describe it?

Oh yes, that's the latest and greatest new feature found in RenderPal V2! Users of a render farm (no matter

if it is an artist or an administrator) need to have access to their render farm all the time, 24/7. Anyone who has ever rendered something knows that renderings not always work as intended: Renderer programs crash from time to time, frames go missing, or someone made a change and the whole job has to be restarted.

Since most of us won't be at the office the entire day, an easy way to monitor the render farm (and thus RenderPal) from anywhere was in need. Sure, we already had the RenderPal V2 Remote Controller which does a great job at this, but it requires an installation and simply doesn't work from everywhere, as it requires a ''real'' computer running Windows (or Wine). So the best solution was to build a new tool on the one technology that really is ubiquitously available: The Web.

The idea behind this new web interface was to give anyone access to their render farm using a web browser: This way, RenderPal is available on pretty much any device, no matter what hardware or operating system - and all this without any installation or download! The web interface closely resembles the Remote Controller, and that's just what we wanted to achieve. Users can take a quick look at all the pools, clients and - most importantly - jobs in their render farm and take any necessary actions, like restarting a job or stopping an entire pool.

What would be a typical workflow for someone who wishes to use RenderPal?

The first step is to install everything; we made this as easy as possible, like offering silent installations, and RenderPal is also fully portable, meaning that you can just copy one RenderPal folder to all other computers and things will work as expected.

The next step would be to set up everything: The server and client options, configuring the farm layout (in the form of client pools), setting up the renderers and stuff like that. This is a one-time task, and it isn't a lot of work, actually. We tried to make the whole setup as easy and comfortable as possible.

Once this has been done, the artists can start using RenderPal. Usually, they will submit their rendering jobs to RenderPal either via our submitter scripts (with these, they can submit new jobs directly from within their main application, like Maya or 3dsMax) or by manually creating a job with the Remote Controller. Once the job has been sent to the RenderPal V2 Server, it will be eventually picked up and rendered by the various client nodes. The artists can check the status of their jobs (and control them in various ways, if necessary) at any time using the Remote Controller or Web Interface. RenderPal also offers features like email notifications so that the artists will always know when their jobs have been rendered or something went wrong.

Have you done analyses of the advantages of using this product versus native solutions available from rendering software?

One of the main benefits of RenderPal is that it supports a multitude of renderers, not just one or two. Most render farms work with a bunch of renderers and post-processing tools, and having one solution for all of them is a great advantage. Furthermore, RenderPal simply offers more feature than any integrated solution (like Backburner); the reason of this is simple: We dedicate our entire time to develop a render farm manager, while native solutions are just an addition and will never receive the time and effort we can invest into it. Many users also told us that RenderPal not only offers far more (important!) features, but is also more robust and stable (especially when renderings fail, which simply happens from time to time).

What software and languages are you using to make this product?

The core application is written in C++ using MS Visual Studio. The Linux and MacOSX ports (which are based on wxWidgets) are made with CodeBlocks and XCode, respectively. RenderPal also offers and internally uses Python in many areas (like for net job events and even the automatic updater uses a Python script to perform its deeds). As for the web interface, the used languages include HTML, CSS, JavaScript (and jQuery) and a bit of PHP. Our tools of choice here are Aptana Studio and Dreamweaver for the main layout.

What are some of the biggest or most interesting tasks that you have seen clients use RenderPal for?

Oh, there are many, actually! One of the more recent uses was in the making of the movie ''Iron Sky''; the company behind this movie used RenderPal for their rendering needs. We also closely work together with RiseFX, a very well-known post-production company based in Germany; their work include movies like Harry Potter and Cloud Atlas. But my favorite still is when the USSS (US Secret Service) ordered a license of RenderPal! They explained that they use RenderPal to render simulations of different security scenarios -

quite cool, if you ask me!

It is really interesting in how many different areas RenderPal is being used. We mainly have users in the arts and game sectors, but we also have users from the architecture, science or even medicine fields.

Have you received much feedback about RenderPal?

Most people are simply happy with what RenderPal has to offer - and this shows us what a great product our once little tool has become! We mainly receive support questions, and through some of these, we develop new ideas. There are some companies we work together with more closely, like the aforementioned RiseFX. Together with these companies, we create new ideas that directly come from the industry, and thus are usually great additions for most other users as well.

And then there are those users who simply let us know how helpful RenderPal is in their everyday chores - and this is the kind of feedback that really makes our days!

Do you think people are going to go more for cloud-based render farms instead of building their own?

This is difficult to estimate I think. Building your own render farm is expensive at first (though not as expensive as it has been in the past anymore). However, using external solutions to get your scenes rendered has its drawbacks as well: First, you have to share your work, and there always is a certain risk that your files will be abused or even fall into the wrong hands; you also don't have as much control as you might need, and your jobs might not be done the way you want (or in the time you need it to be done); last but not least, nobody will render your stuff for free, and so using such solutions might cost you more over time than building your own farm. For companies which only need to render something once in a while and where the risks are acceptable, cloud-based render farms can be a good and cheap solution, but for companies which render more frequently, building their own farm should still be the way to go (especially with fast hardware becoming cheaper and cheaper).

What are some of the future features you plan for RenderPal?

Our current focus lies on the Web Interface. We will extend it more and more, and we want to add most of the features present in the Remote Controller. This is quite a lot of work already, as everything has to be written from scratch, and we also need to extend the core program as well for this to work.

But users can expect some other nice additions as well: More renderer system extensions, more Python integration (and thus more ways to customize RenderPal and integrate it into rendering pipelines), several ''user experience'' improvements... Our to do list still has plenty of nice stuff on it!

CG Masters competition

Fri, Jan 18 2013 22:34:43 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

CG Masters announced their latest competition on a Facebook post where the group is inviting any CG artist to enter and win one of the prizes. The goal is to create a simple, easy to use video tutorial. The subject should be about one of the facets of CG graphics, such as how to make fire effects, how to create an animated clown, and so on.

You have two weeks to submit your work, and the prizes include up to $150 and all CG Masters DVDs.

Creation of The Hulk

Wed, Jan 16 2013 19:59:37 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video interview, the creators of The Hulk at ILM explain how they came to create this CG character for The Avengers.

Autodesk show reel submissions open

Wed, Jan 16 2013 19:52:52 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Autodesk has announced the call for submissions for its 2013 Best of the Best Show Reel, and you have less than a month to enter if you wish to participate.

Every year the company releases a show reel that showcases some of the works done by their customers using various products such as Autodesk 3DS MAX, Flame and Maya. Submissions are now open until

February 15, and anyone interested can submit their short videos or animations. The result will be shown off at NAB in April of this year.

Smartphone design trends

Tue, Jan 15 2013 20:10:23 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Smartphones have evolved a lot in the last decade, and the interfaces we've seen show many different design choices. Here is a quick look at the most popular smartphone devices and the designs that they produced.

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Adobe CS2 available for free again

Mon, Jan 14 2013 21:32:20 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Earlier this month, some users found out about new links for Adobe CS2, available for free, with valid serial numbers. However, shortly after the discovery, those links were taken down, and it became clear that the company had done this release in order to help actual customers to get a version of the software that would not require an activation server, since those were taken offline. However, it now appears that Adobe has done the unexpected, and made these available again to the wider world.

Whereas before, one would require an Adobe account to access those links, now Adobe CS2 along with all of the software (Photoshop, Illustrator, Premier, etc) is available on a new download page, along with the serial numbers, without the need for registering. While the page itself doesn't specify what the purpose of this release is, the original forum post made by Adobe seems to have been deleted.

Of course, this software dates back to 2006, so there may be some issues running it on modern systems. On Windows 7, most of the applications will work fine. However, to get them to update, you may need to bring your clock back to before *10/01/2011* while the update process happens. Some users have reported problems running them on Windows 8, however using a virtual machine is always a possibility. Finally, on 64bits systems, it seems the programs may have problems with invalid folder names, and installing them in a custom location seemed to solve the issue.

Of course, this 7 years old solution can't compete with a modern release of CS6, but for those who need something to get started, this is certainly an unexpected bonus.

Download page: https://www.adobe.com/downloads/cs2_downloads/index.html

Realistic textures in Blender

Sun, Jan 13 2013 19:15:26 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

This video shows an interesting tutorial on creating realistic textures using Blender.

Artist showcase: Mashamaklaut

Sat, Jan 12 2013 9:15:10 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature the art of Maria, also known as Mashamaklaut.

mashamaklaut

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The Avengers behind the scenes

Fri, Jan 11 2013 21:42:17 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

ILM published a video showing some of the behind the scenes footage from **The Avengers**, showing off the VFX used in the movie.

2013 Oscars nominees announced

Fri, Jan 11 2013 6:21:02 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The 2013 Oscar nominees have been announced today, an event that is highly hyped and well attended by a lot of folks in the industry. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences released the full list covering all of the popular movies from 2012, along with renown names from Hollywood.

The Academy Awards will be hosted on February 24, 8:30PM ET. A lot of artists took part in the creation of those movies, many of which find their names in the list. Here are all of the nominees, where you can see several popular names coming back for many of the categories:

BEST PICTURE

* Amour
* Argo
* Beasts of the Southern Wild
* Django Unchained
* Les Miserables
* Life of Pi
* Lincoln
* Silver Linings Playbook
* Zero Dark Thirty

BEST ACTOR

* Bradley Cooper, Silver Linings Playbook
* Daniel Day-Lewis, Lincoln
* Hugh Jackman, Les Miserables
* Joaquin Phoenix, The Master
* Denzel Washington, Flight

BEST ACTRESS

* Jessica Chastain, Zero Dark Thirty
* Jennifer Lawrence, Silver Linings Playbook
* Emmanuelle Riva, Amour
* Naomi Watts, The Impossible
* Quvenzhané Wallis, Beasts of the Southern Wild

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

* Alan Arkin, Argo
* Robert DeNiro, Silver Linings Playbook
* Philip Seymour Hoffman, The Master
* Tommy Lee Jones, Lincoln
* Christoph Waltz, Django Unchained

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

* Amy Adams, The Master
* Sally Field, Lincoln
* Anne Hathaway, Les Miserables
* Helen Hunt, The Sessions
* Jacki Weaver, Silver Linings Playbook

BEST DIRECTOR

* Michael Haneke, Amour
* Ang Lee, Life of Pi
* David O. Russell, Silver Linings Playbook
* Steven Spielberg, Lincoln
* Benh Zeitlin, Beasts of the Southern Wild

BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

* Wes Anderson and Roman Coppola, Moonrise Kingdom
* Mark Boal, Zero Dark Thirty
* John Gatins, Flight
* Michael Haneke, Amour
* Quentin Tarantino, Django Unchained

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

* Lucy Alibar and Benh Zeitlin, Beasts of the Southern Wild
* Tony Kushner, Lincoln
* David Magee, Life of Pi

* David O. Russell, Silver Linings Playbook
* Chris Terrio, Argo

BEST ANIMATED FEATURE FILM

* Brave
* Frankenweenie
* ParaNorman
* The Pirates! Band of Misfits
* Wreck-It Ralph

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY

* Anna Karenina, Seamus McGarvey
* Django Unchained, Robert Richardson
* Life of Pi, Claudio Miranda
* Lincoln, Janusz Kaminski
* Skyfall, Roger Deakins

BEST COSTUME DESIGN

* Anna Karenina, Jacqueline Durran
* Les Misérables, Paco Delgado
* Lincoln, Joanna Johnston
* Mirror Mirror, Eiko Ishioka
* Snow White and the Huntsman, Colleen Atwood

BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

* 5 Broken Cameras
* The Gatekeepers
* How to Survive a Plague
* The Invisible War
* Searching for Sugar Man

BEST DOCUMENTARY SHORT SUBJECT

* Inocente, Sean Fine and Andrea Nix Fine
* Kings Point, Sari Gilman and Jedd Wider
* Mondays at Racine, Cynthia Wade and Robin Honan
* Open Heart, Kief Davidson and Cori Shepherd Stern
* Redemption, Jon Alpert and Matthew O'Neill

BEST FILM EDITING

* Argo, William Goldenberg
* Life of Pi, Tim Squyres
* Lincoln, Michael Kahn
* Silver Linings Playbook, Jay Cassidy and Crispin Struthers
* Zero Dark Thirty, Dylan Tichenor and William Goldenberg

BEST FOREIGN FILM

* Amour, Austria
* Kon-Tiki, Norway
* No, Chile
* A Royal Affair, Denmark
* War Witch, Canada

BEST MAKEUP AND HAIRSTYLING

* Hitchcock, Howard Berger, Peter Montagna and Martin Samuel
* The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey, Peter Swords King, Rick Findlater and Tami Lane
* Les Misérables, Lisa Westcott and Julie Dartnell

BEST ORIGINAL SCORE

* Anna Karenina, Dario Marianelli
* Argo, Alexandre Desplat
* Life of Pi, Mychael Danna
* Lincoln, John Williams
* Skyfall, Thomas Newman

BEST ORIGINAL SONG

* Before My Time from Chasing Ice, Music and Lyric by J. Ralph
* Everybody Needs A Best Friend from Ted, Music by Walter Murphy; Lyric by Seth MacFarlane
* Pi's Lullaby from Life of Pi, Music by Mychael Danna; Lyric by Bombay Jayashri
* Skyfall from Skyfall, Music and Lyric by Adele Adkins and Paul Epworth
* Suddenly from Les Misérables, Music by Claude-Michel Schönberg; Lyric by Herbert Kretzmer and Alain Boublil

BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN

* Anna Karenina, Production Design: Sarah Greenwood; Set Decoration: Katie Spencer
* The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey, Production Design: Dan Hennah; Set Decoration: Ra Vincent and Simon Bright
* Les Misérables, Production Design: Eve Stewart; Set Decoration: Anna Lynch-Robinson
* Life of Pi, Production Design: David Gropman; Set Decoration: Anna Pinnock
* Lincoln, Production Design: Rick Carter; Set Decoration: Jim Erickson

BEST ANIMATED SHORT FILM

* Adam and Dog, Minkyu Lee
* Fresh Guacamole, PES
* Head over Heels, Timothy Reckart and Fodhla Cronin O'Reilly
* Maggie Simpson in The Longest Daycare, David Silverman
* Paperman, John Kahrs

BEST LIVE ACTION SHORT FILM

* Asad, Bryan Buckley and Mino Jarjoura
* Buzkashi Boys, Sam French and Ariel Nasr
* Curfew, Shawn Christensen
* Death of a Shadow (Dood van een Schaduw), Tom Van Avermaet and Ellen De Waele
* Henry, Yan England

BEST SOUND EDITING

* Argo, Erik Aadahl and Ethan Van der Ryn
* Django Unchained, Wylie Stateman
* Life of Pi, Eugene Gearty and Philip Stockton
* Skyfall, Per Hallberg and Karen Baker Landers
* Zero Dark Thirty, Paul N.J. Ottosson

BEST SOUND MIXING

* Argo, John Reitz, Gregg Rudloff and Jose Antonio Garcia
* Les Misérables, Andy Nelson, Mark Paterson and Simon Hayes
* Life of Pi, Ron Bartlett, D.M. Hemphill and Drew Kunin
* Lincoln, Andy Nelson, Gary Rydstrom and Ronald Judkins
* Skyfall, Scott Millan, Greg P. Russell and Stuart Wilson

BEST VISUAL EFFECTS

* The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey, Joe Letteri, Eric Saindon, David Clayton and R. Christopher White
* Life of Pi, Bill Westenhofer, Guillaume Rocheron, Erik-Jan De Boer and Donald R. Elliott
* Marvel's The Avengers, Janek Sirrs, Jeff White, Guy Williams and Dan Sudick
* Prometheus, Richard Stammers, Trevor Wood, Charley Henley and Martin Hill
* Snow White and the Huntsman, Cedric Nicolas-Troyan, Philip Brennan, Neil Corbould and Michael Dawson

GIMP 2.9 and 2.10 feature map

Fri, Jan 11 2013 6:07:11 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

GIMP is a very popular free, open source alternative to Adobe Photoshop, and has been growing vastly over the past few years. Now, the developers over at GimpUsers have a post showing off some of the new features that users can expect for the 2.9 and 2.10 releases upcoming this year.

Among the new features, we find:

* 16/32 bit per channel support
* Lossless color space conversions
* New tool: Unified transformation
* No- and LoHalo-Samplers
* More on-canvas previews
* Multi-core CPU / GPU support
* OpenCL-accelerated filters
* GEGL based filters and plugins
* ICC v4 color profile conversion support
* Tile based computation and projection
* Color temperature correction

Two filters are also being removed, due to them being replaced by newer features or not being used by the community:

* Lanczos 3 sampler (replaced by the new LoBlur samling method)
* Maximum RGB filter

Version 2.10 of GIMP is expected to be released in late 2013.

EE British Academy Film Awards nominees announced

Wed, Jan 9 2013 22:29:08 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

The EE British Academy Film Awards will happen on February 10, 2013 at the Royal Opera House in London, and is one of the well known events where film makers get recognized for their works. Now, BAFTA announced the full list of nominees on their site.

Lincoln received ten nominations, Les Misérables and Life of Pi were each nominated in nine categories, whereas Skyfall has eight nominations. Argo got seven nominations and Anna Karenina has six. Django Unchained and Zero Dark Thirty are each nominated five times.

Here is the list of all the categories for nominees:

* Best Film
* Outstanding British Film
* Outstanding Debut
* Adapted Screenplay
* Animated Film
* Cinematography
* Costume Design
* Director
* Documentary
* Editing
* Film Not in the English Language
* Make Up & Hair
* Original Music
* Original Screenplay
* Production Design
* Short Animation
* Short Film
* Sound
* Special Visual Effects
* Leading Actor
* Supporting Actor
* Leading Actress
* Supporting Actress
* EE Rising Star Award

User interaction and design documentary

Wed, Jan 9 2013 22:21:27 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

A group of industry thought leaders created this short documentary about user interaction and design.

FarmVille 2 3D graphics video

Tue, Jan 8 2013 22:00:34 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under videos

In this latest video, Zynga explains how FarmVille 2 uses 3D animations from 3DS MAX instead of the traditional sprites in order to give a more modern look to the game.

What makes a good touchscreen

Tue, Jan 8 2013 7:59:29 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Touchscreens have become present in many devices, and a lot of technology experts predict that within a few years, all screens will start using touch, on every possible item we can think of. Already, smartphones and tablets have driven the evolution of touchscreen technologies, and the screens we have now are much better than what we used to have just a couple of years ago. But what makes a good touchscreen, and how can you compare them?

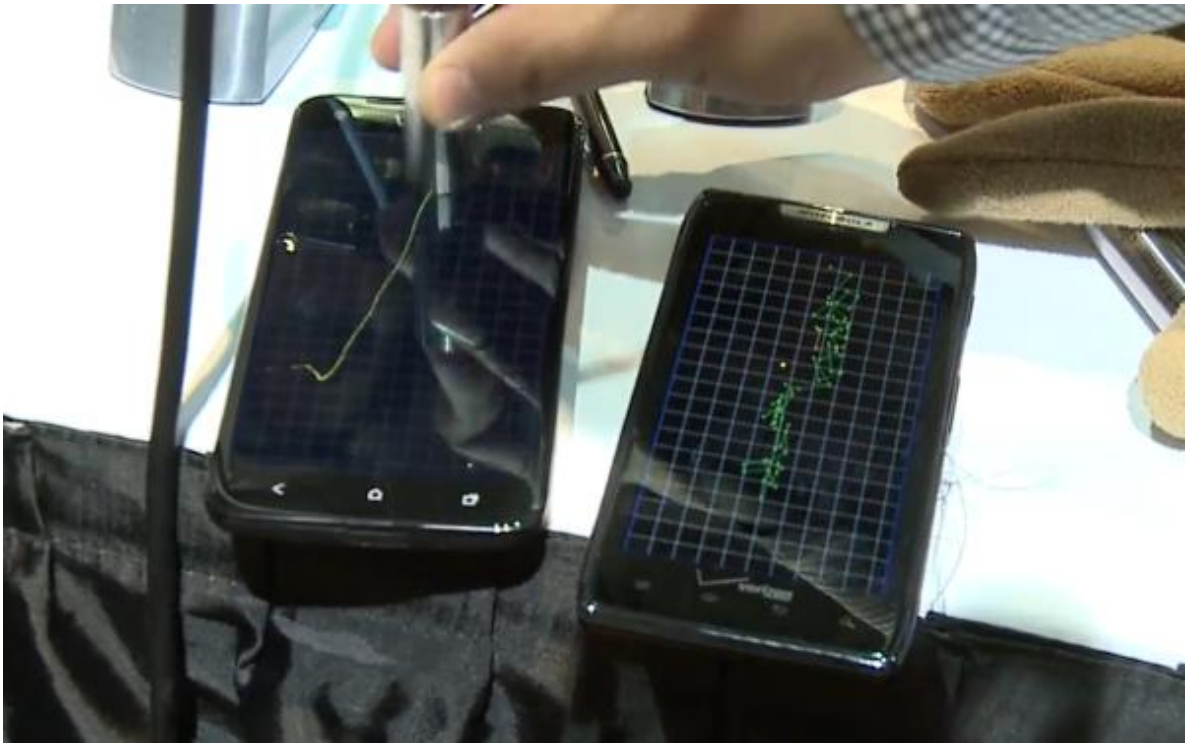
A touchscreen is simply a normal screen with different materials used to make the display, along with sensors to detect touch. The early models of touchscreen displays are called *resistive* and use two thin layers, with a coating between them. Using an electric charge, the second layer can feel when the first one would be pushed down, as an electrical current would pass. These are still used in some applications because they are very cheap to create, but they require the user to actually push down on the screen, and are less responsive.

Modern touchscreens use capacitive panels, which consist of a glass layer with conductive transparent coating applied. Because the human body is also conductive of electricity, touching part of the screen modifies its electrostatic field. Because of this, the resulting quality is much higher, however the drawback is the need for a human contact, so these cannot be used while wearing gloves or by handling a pen.

Recently, newer versions have been developed using in-cell technology, where the capacitors are inside the glass instead of on the other side, which means the screen can be thinner and brighter. *Super AMOLED* displays are one example of this technology.

But the quality of your touchscreen is not just in the glass itself. The firmware and other software used in the device plays a major part. When the iPhone came out, it quickly became renowned for having a much better touchscreen than other devices. Tests were done and some reports pointed at firmware in the iPhone simply processing the information in a more accurate way.

Another source of issues with touchscreens is noise. If you have a noisy device, or a noisy environment such as a nearby power supply, then your accuracy will go down. The screen is trying to detect a fairly small contact point from your finger, in a device filled with electronics providing their own electrical pollution. Finally, the power applied to sensors also makes a difference. For example, if a phone uses 12 volts to power the sensors, then it will have a better result than one that uses 3 or 5 volts, like most older phones. However, using more power means your battery life will be lower.

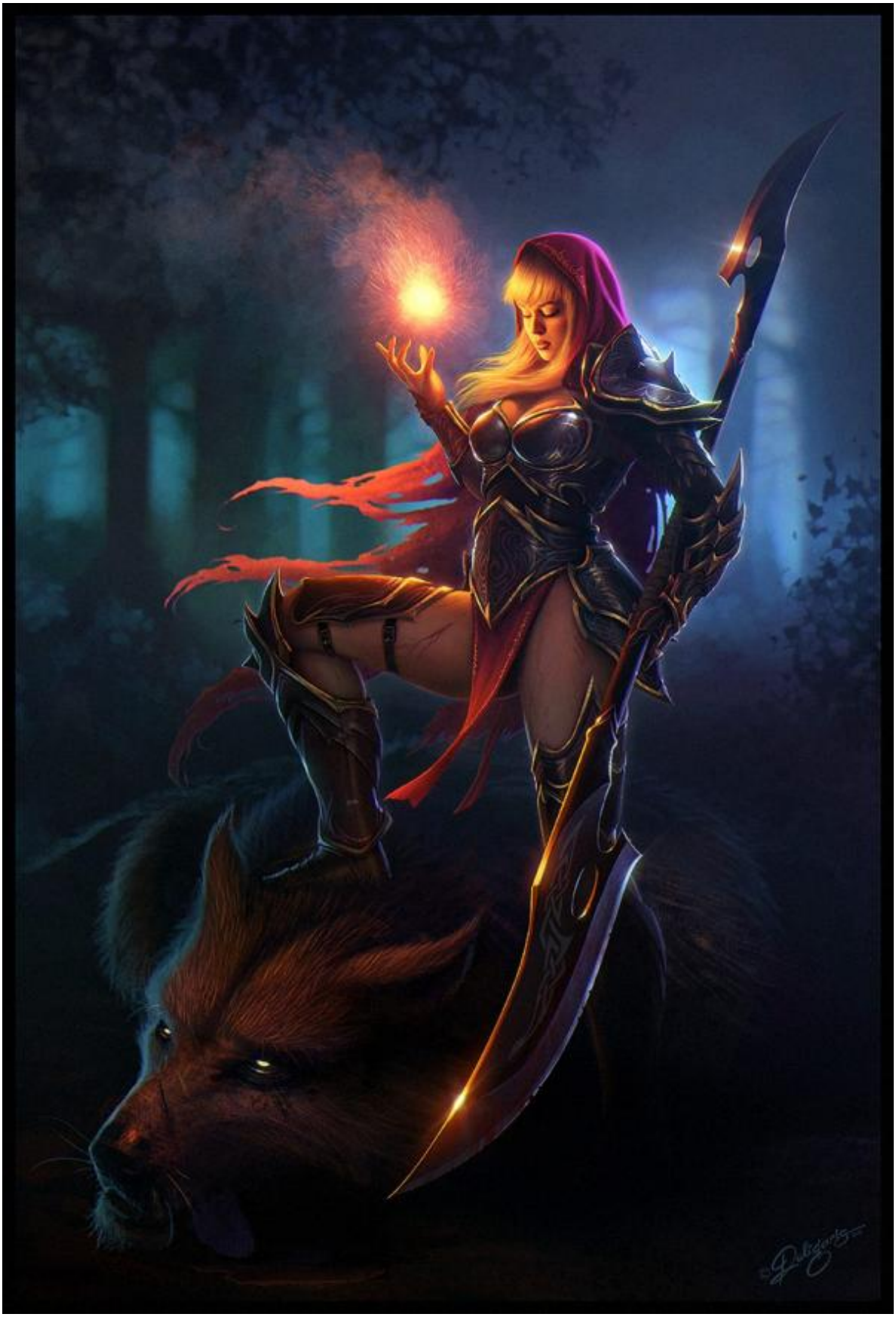


There are some tests available out there to find out how good a touchscreen is. For example, Synaptics makes the TouchExplorer app available for Android devices, which has a series of testing functions. There are also physical devices which can detect how good the screen is. At the end of the day, if your device uses the latest technology, with the most powerful sensors, and there is no nearby noise to interfere, you are likely to get the best result.

Artist showcase: Nick Deligaris

Tue, Jan 8 2013 4:48:09 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're happy to showcase the art of Nick Deligaris, a digital painter from Greece.



Adobe mistake allowed free CS2 downloads

Mon, Jan 7 2013 21:53:39 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Early in the day on Monday, some users on the site SlickDeals found out that Adobe had released its CS2 suite for free to the world. Unfortunately, the joy did not last long.

Adobe CS2 is 7 years old, but for many, a free version of this set of applications is better than nothing. The downloads only required a free Adobe account, and anyone could download the installation files and serial codes. Unfortunately, those links were soon taken down, as it appears they were instead meant as a replacement download for CS2 owners, after the company took down activation servers.

It looks like artists who need the CS suite will need to buy it, or instead turn to free alternatives.

Brekel Kinect Pro tools released

Sun, Jan 6 2013 21:02:33 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The Microsoft Kinect system was designed for gaming, but as soon as the SDK was released, it didn't take long for 3D artists to start thinking of the amazing capabilities it could have. Now, two new independent applications have been released to take advantage of those features.

The latest releases are Brekel Kinect Pro Body and Brekel Kinect Pro PointCloud. Those allow users to import motion capture information either as a 3D object or as a complete animation.

Some of the features of Kinect Pro Body include:
* Uses Microsoft Kinect SDK so it can happily co-exist with the other Brekel Kinect Pro applications
* Always work in realtime, no post processing required
* Supports hand, foot and head rotations
* Record straight to disk in FBX, BVH and TXT formats
* Stream into MotionBuilder in realtime
* Very quick person recognition
* Support for 2 person tracking

Kinect Pro PointCloud features:
* Uses Microsoft Kinect SDK so it can happily co-exist with the other Brekel Kinect Pro applications
* Drastically improved speed and accuracy over free Brekel Kinect workflow
* Record pointclouds and/or meshes at full 30 fps to a custom file format
* Convert as a post process to the desired output format(s)
* Supported mesh cache formats: Realflow .bin, Alembic, Wavefront .obj sequences
* Supported particle cache formats: Realflow .bin, BGEO (Houdini pre-v12), PDB, PDC, Krakatoa PRT, PTC
* Supported texture formats: AVI, JPG, PNG, TGA, TIFF

Autodesk MediaSync overview

Sun, Jan 6 2013 20:53:51 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video, an Autodesk developer talks about Autodesk MediaSync, a function that allows users to integrate their 3DS MAX workflow with other products such as Adobe Photoshop.

10 places where artists can find inspiration

Sat, Jan 5 2013 21:32:05 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Just like a book author staring at that first blank page, many artists often have to face the fact that inspiration doesn't always come easily. You end up staring at your screen or tablet, wondering when the ideas are going to come. Here are 10 ways for an artist to find inspiration so they can keep going.

1. Family and friends

This may not be a big revelation, but going to family or friends for inspiration is a very good start. Unfortunately a lot of artists omit this step for fear of what kind of critical reaction they may receive,

especially if they are making art that goes against the social norm. It's no surprise that some of the biggest and most well known artists of the past were making works that went against what most others in their times were doing, and as such it would have been difficult to have others, even friends or family, go along with their choices of art style.

2. Your scrapbook

Most artists have ideas on a regular basis, but those ideas don't always pan out to a finished product. You may start on a project, only to realize it isn't turning out the way you want and then trash it. But instead of throwing those aborted works to the recycle bin, why not keep them around in a scrapbook? You never know when you may want to go back and view a previous idea from a new angle.

3. Other media types

If you're a digital painter, it's easy to go for inspiration sources that relate directly to painting. The same is true if you are a 3D artist, your sources of inspiration usually cover other 3D works. But it can be very useful to go outside of your field to find inspiration. Even something like a song or music can bring you the right inspiration to complete your drawing. A photograph or movie can also bring you some ideas, even if you're making something totally unrelated.

4. Going for a walk

Your studio, whether that's your personal bedroom or a professional working place, probably includes a lot of material you can draw on for inspiration. But sometimes that just isn't enough. Going out for a walk is always useful for many reasons. First, it can help clear your mind, then you don't know what you may see. Unlike your studio, which may not change very often, the outside world is always in movement, and can provide you with some inspiration.

5. Other artists

A lot of artists are reluctant to look at other works to draw inspiration from. The problem is that you don't want to be copying their ideas, you would prefer to come up with your own. But sometimes that just isn't happening. A lot of the most famous art works out there are actually new versions of old ideas. Improving on an existing concept is just as valid as creating one from scratch.

6. Experimenting

Sometimes when you're staring at that plain screen, you just need to start doing something, anything. If you use Adobe Photoshop, for example, there are a myriad of filters and functions available to you that you can start playing with and will give you many different results. Just trying some of these out may give you the inspiration you need to keep going.

7. Enter art challenges

Most artists prefer to come up with their own creative ideas, but sometimes it may be useful to let others decide. Many art sites offer challenges, where they give you the topic and you have to draw something following their request. It may be a way to get something done in a case where you have no idea of your own, and you can often win a prize if you do a good job.

8. Look to the past

Most eras of the past have been focused on a particular type of art. Whether we're talking about Ancient Greek or the Renaissance, it's easy to recognize pieces from those eras. While you may already have your own style, it can be useful to go back in history and try some of the styles that they were doing, just to see what kind of results you may get.

9. Nature

Looking out to nature for inspiration is an easy one, and certainly if you have a park, river or forest near your location, then you probably already used this resource to your advantage. But looking out to nature can mean more than just pretty landscapes. Go out to the mall, look at the various store signs, the fonts they use, the embossing style. Or check out the patterns used in clothing stores, or on fabric that is being sold. You can find inspiration in many different locations, even if you don't live near a picture-perfect landscape.

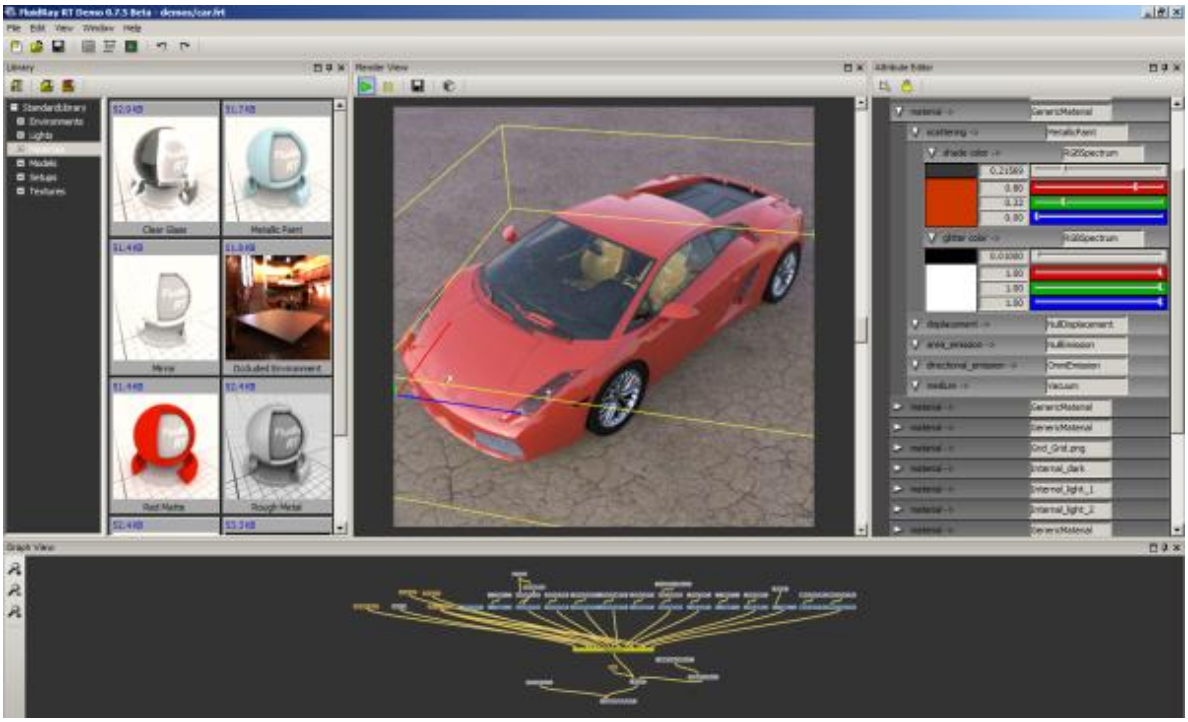
10. Inspiration web sites

Coming to TideArt is hopefully a good way to be inspired, but there are sites out there that focus on nothing but inspiration. For design, you can try out DesignZZZ, whereas for Photoshop users, you may already know the very popular Abduzeedo, a site dedicated to tutorials and inspiration.

FluidRay RT 0.8.1 released

Fri, Jan 4 2013 23:14:23 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

The developers of FluidRay RT released their latest beta version this week, 0.8.1, which adds support for MacOS systems for the first time along with several new features.



FluidRay RT is a real-time physically based renderer which has been in beta for some time, and claims to produce render quality images in real-time, something that is usually done in a matter of minutes or hours. We interviewed the team behind this application a while back.

Version 0.8.1, still a beta release, is now available for download. Some of the features include:
* Mac OS X support
* Completely free download, registration is no longer required
* Updated to Embree 1.1 (better speed, lower memory usage)
* Added a Low Discrepancy sampler
* Improved quality and convergence speed on Metropolis sampler (more to come in the upcoming releases)
* New object manipulator (adding rotation as well)
* Quick resolution picker in the RenderView
* Automatic disconnection of nodes when connecting to a plug that has already a connection
* Added some velvet materials to the library
* Graph editor zoom is now centered on the cursor
* Automatic save of .bak files

XrayCat Survival Toolkit

Fri, Jan 4 2013 22:50:08 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video, the team behind XrayCat Survival Toolkit shows off some of the features of their new release.

Deus Ex: Pack art video

Thu, Jan 3 2013 20:05:15 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this short video, the creators of the box art for the game **Deus Ex: Human Revolution** talk about some of the amazing work that go into making pack art.

The Avengers anatomy of a shot

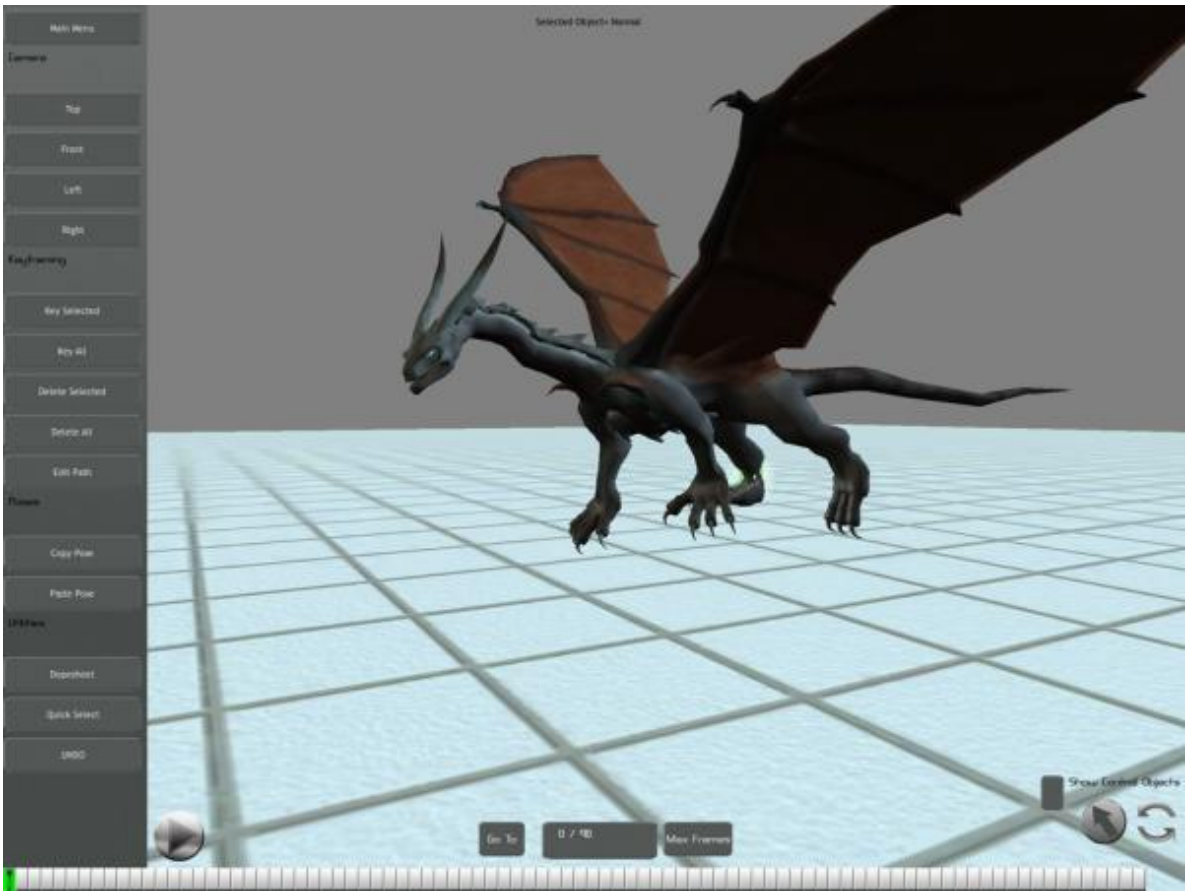
Wed, Jan 2 2013 21:31:00 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video, the crew behind the movie **The Avengers** explains how one of the most difficult CGI shot was made.

Interview with TouchAnimator

Tue, Jan 1 2013 8:03:19 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we bring you an interview with Brian Williamson, from Digital Sorcery, creators of TouchAnimator, a mobile app allowing the creation and manipulation of 3D models.



Could you introduce yourself and tell us your background?

I have a film and television degree from The Ohio State University (they no longer have a film production

unit). After living overseas for a while I returned to the US and got a job as a Multimedia Designer for a university. After editing videos instructors asked me to do more and more interactivity using Actionscript in Flash. So, I accidentally found my way into programming.

What is TouchAnimator and some of the main features?

TouchAnimator allows you to pose and animate pre-rigged 3D characters. It takes full advantage of the touch capabilities of tablets to allow easy posing. It also comes with timeline and path editing tools to edit your animation. You can export animation data to Blender for rendering or further editing.

How long did it take to create this app, both for iOS and Android?

The IOS version took about 8-10 months of off-and-on development. The Android version took about another month to export to.

You released the iPad version first and now you recently made an Android port. What are some of the challenges for each platform?

Some of the Android tablets have a very wide aspect ratio, so that changed the way the UI was laid out. I had to have extra checks in my code to lay out the UI differently depending on the screen size.

If you had to redo it today, is there anything you would do differently?

I would have made serious attempts to get other programmers to come in on the project. I should have stared a Kickstarter project for it as well.

What is your typical user type, would it be more useful for a hobbyist or can this be integrated in a professional workflow?

I really built it as an animation ''sketching/prototyping'' tool, so anywhere you are, you can quickly whip up some animation. I made every effort to make the app very streamlined to accomplish this. So, even though hobbyists and beginners would get the most out of it due to it's easy workflow it is my hope that studios will adopt it as a way to quickly try out and share animation concepts.

What made you decide to create a Blender exporter?

I have become an avid Blender user. After attempting several different export ideas I decided it was not currently possible to support everyone. Since Blender is free and exports to a wide variety of other formats I figured it would be the best platform to support right now.

Did you get some user feedback so far, what have people created with the app?

I have gotten generally positive feedback. Several people are very excited to see where the app goes next. So far no one has shown me any animations they have created but I have not set up any forum to do so yet.

Do you plan to keep working on TouchAnimator, add new features? If so, what do you have in mind?

I am constantly working on improving the program. Users asked for an Android version so I got it out as soon as I could. By far the most requested feature is the ability to import objects from outside TouchAnimator and rig them in the program. It's a significant technical challenge due to the closed nature of most tablets, but I am working on it. My goal is to make TouchAnimator so useful that it sparks a wave of 3D animation apps.

Blender end of year meeting

Mon, Dec 31 2012 19:19:42 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

On the last weekend of the year, the Blender team is still working to finish the next release of this open source modeler, version 2.66. Here are the news coming out of this developer meeting.

First, we learn that 2.66 is set to be released in early February. It seems like the development team has been hard at work during the Holidays period and various features are taking shape in order to be included in the release.

An alpha pipeline refactor project is underway which will provide better RGBA support, 16 bits PNG files will now be supported, a dynamic topology sculpting mode is being added, a bullet physics engine, Cycles hair rendering, and a new feature called Freestyle. There was also talk of a new *template assets* function for the asset browser, which could hit a future release, along with a voronoi fracture modifier.

Artist showcase: iya-chen

Mon, Dec 31 2012 19:06:04 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

On this last day of 2012, we're happy to feature the talented digital artist Roka, also known as iya-chen.

Creating a magazine in the digital age

Mon, Dec 31 2012 2:11:58 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Magazines have been around for a long time, and for any type of content creator, whether you write

articles, draw images, or capture photos, being published in one can be very rewarding. But what if you want to publish your own magazine? It used to be impossible for someone to simply publish their own magazine, it would require a big investment, printing presses, a distribution network, and so on. But these days, anyone can publish their own magazine and be successful, as long as you know how to proceed. Here are a few tips to help get you started.

The first thing you should do is find your niche. You may be good at design, but what will people look for when they pick up your publication, what kind of marketing will you be doing? Like any other product, the success in selling a magazine is to get people to buy it, which includes knowing your audience. It's usually best to create it about a subject you already know. Next, you need to decide whether you want a print magazine or a digital one. Right now, a lot of professional print magazines are having a hard time to survive, because many readers are moving to digital versions. It also costs a lot less to go digital than to go print. If you decide to print your magazine, remember that you will need to hire a printing service, and find a way to distribute it to news stands.

Once you have your niche, then it's time to gather your topics for the very first issue. If you have friends or colleagues that can help you, those can be a valuable resources. Most magazines have at least 30 pages, so you need enough content to fill that up. Some easy ways to get more content is to interview professionals in your field. Once you have your topics, you can then start working on the layout and design. I highly suggest you learn a professional design application like Adobe InDesign. It may cost you a bit of money, but you will get a much better result than trying to create the magazine in Microsoft Word or Adobe Photoshop.

A typical magazine is very graphics heavy. This means you should fill it with large, high resolution images and graphics. Presentation is key in a magazine, much more so than a book. That's because most people shop magazines and browse through them, looking at the overall look, before deciding whether to buy any. A tip here is to make sure all of your images are high quality. Nothing is worse than having pixelated images degrade the quality of your work.

Once the first issue is done, then you need to find ways to publish and market it. There are many ways to publish a magazine. The simplest is to create a PDF, then distribute it. You could go for a free model, where you try to get sponsors to advertise in your magazine to pay off your costs, and then give away the issue for free online. Or you could setup a sales portal and try to make readers pay a small fee. You can also use social tools to advertise, such as Facebook, Twitter and forums in the niche you're in. Finally, you can also try to get those magazines in mobile formats. Both Apple and Google offer services to publish magazines to the iPhone, iPad and Android devices. Be warned however that it is much harder to get approved for a magazine than it is for an app.

In the end, publishing an online magazine can be done inside of a month by a single motivated person, but you have to be ready to spend long hours to create a quality product. Most of the work for making a magazine ends up being talking to contacts, marketing, and networking. The creation process is the easy part.

Creating Dredd

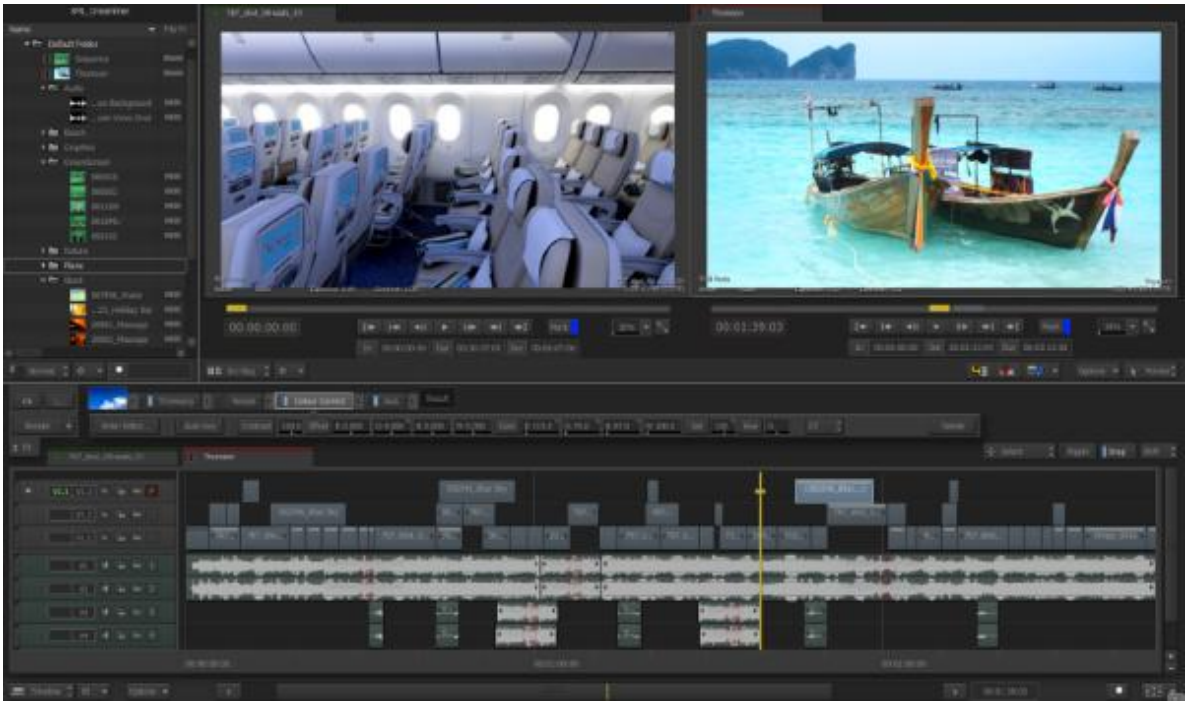
Sun, Dec 30 2012 22:00:54 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video, the creators of the newest **Judge Dredd** film talk about their inspirations for the art style used in the movie, from the early comics to the previous film starring Sylvester Stallone.

Autodesk Smoke now available

Sun, Dec 23 2012 18:06:21 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Just in time for the Holidays, Autodesk released its latest version of Smoke 2013 this week, the MacOS based video editing software, and you can now download a free trial or purchase an upgrade.



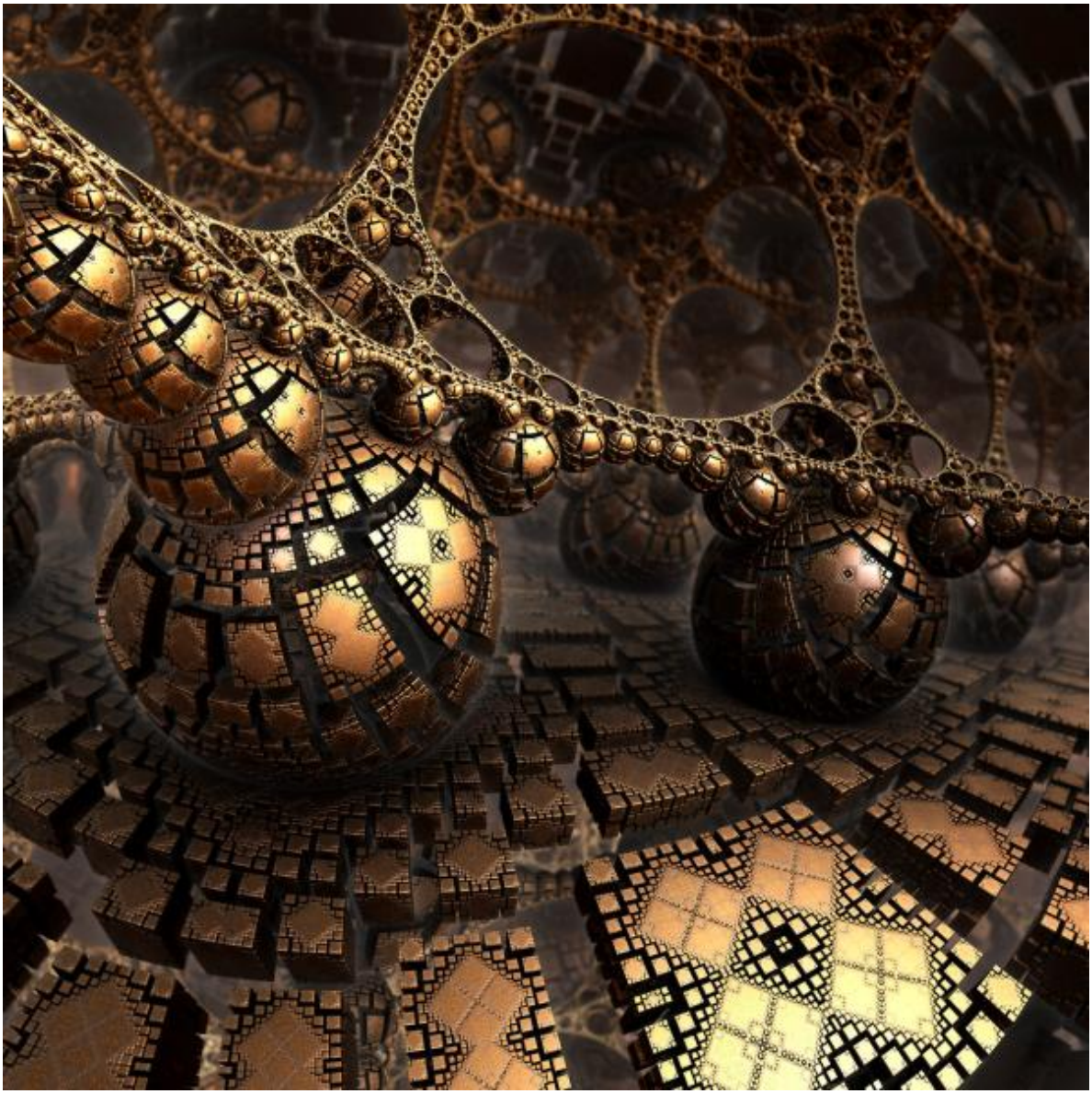
Autodesk Smoke 2013 is an editing and effects software that the company refers to as revolutionary. Thanks to a brand new workflow, the software allows editors to work on projects using the non-linear editing conventions. Some of its features include:

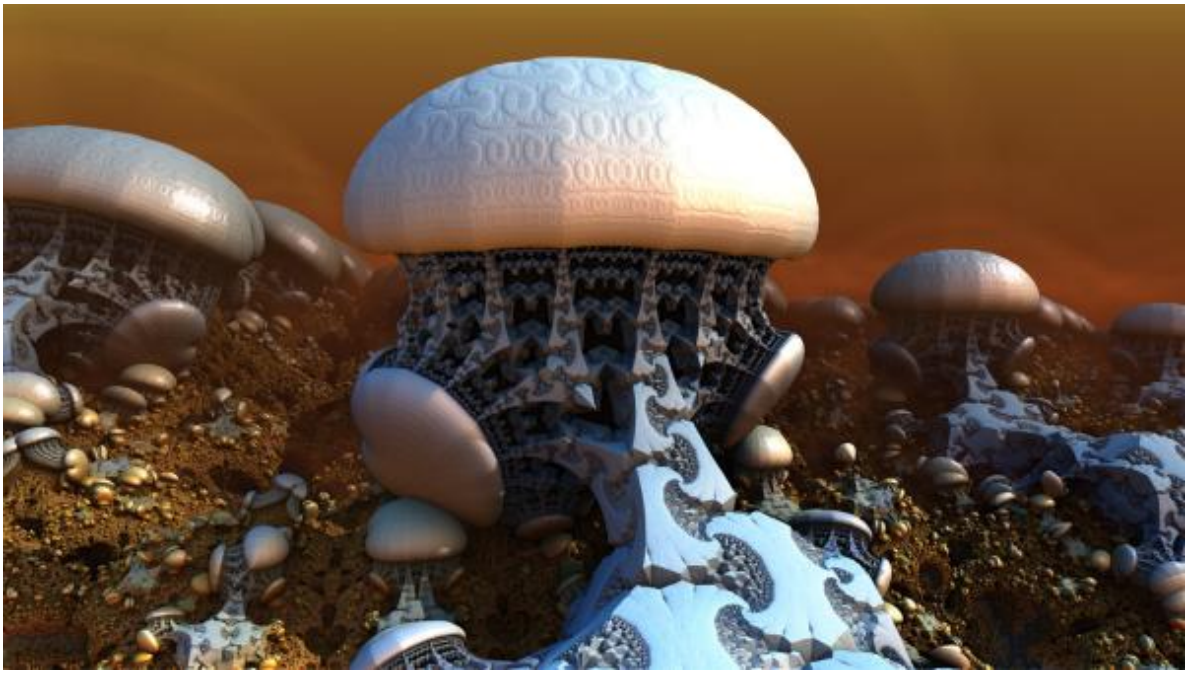
* Accurate conform tools
* Native support for formats you need
* ConnectFX node based compositing
* True 3D effects in action
* Flexible hardware configuration support

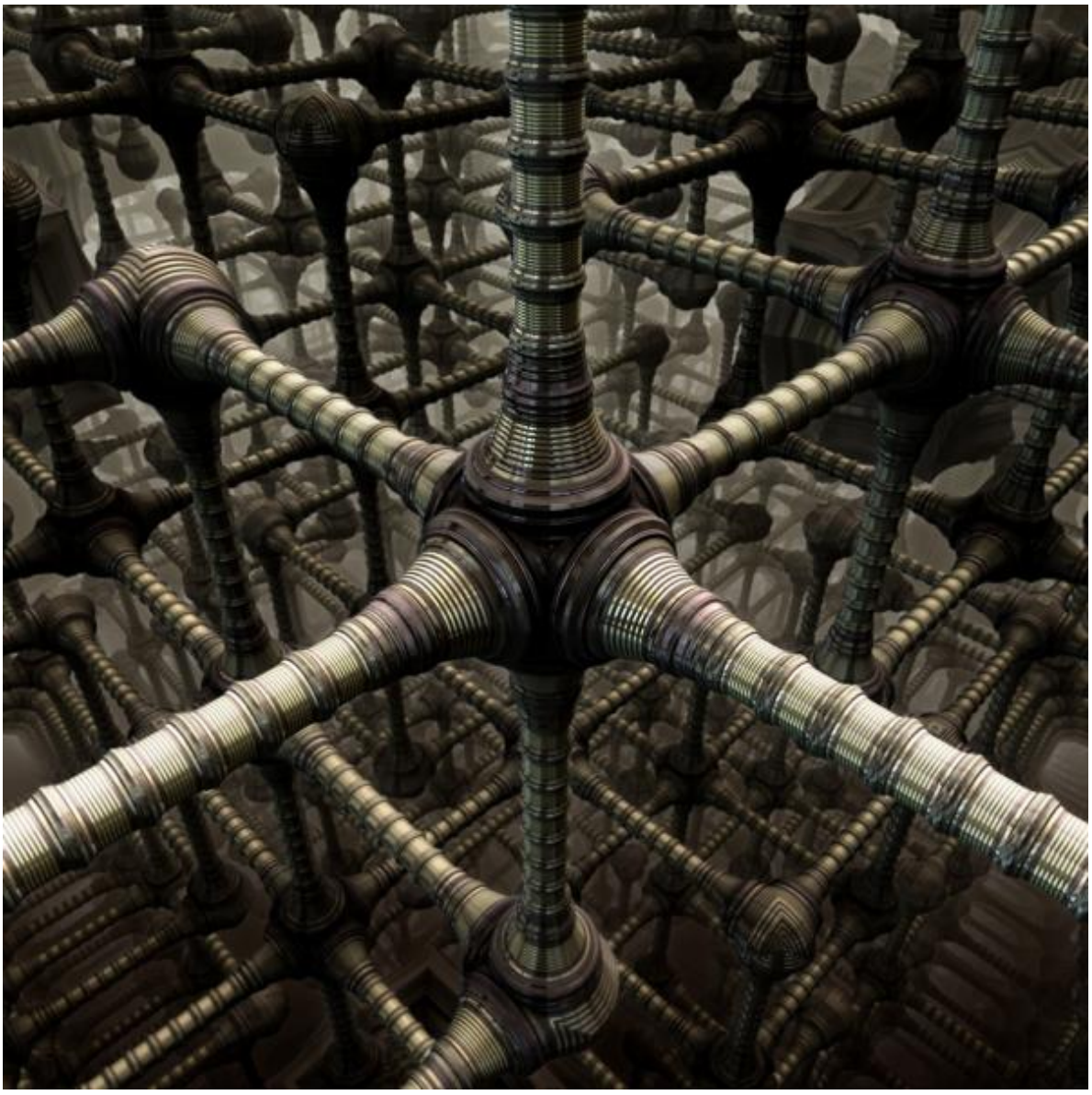
Artist showcase: dainbramage1

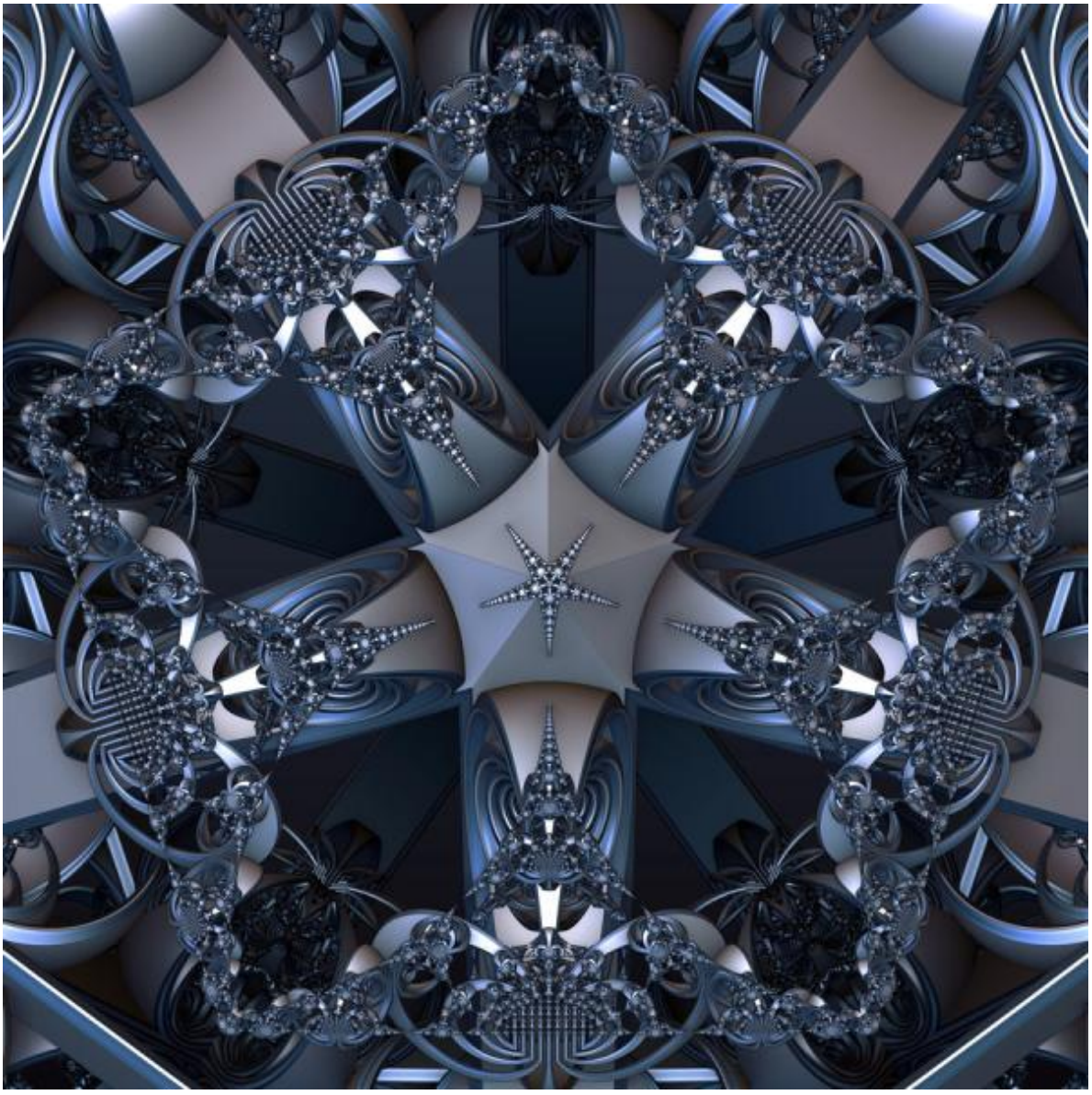
Sun, Dec 23 2012 7:48:36 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature the art of Brent, also known as dainbramage1, a fractal artist from the US.









Adobe Revel reviewed

Fri, Dec 21 2012 21:50:00 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Adobe Revel is a new app that was announced by the company in beta format a few months ago, and last week a revised version was released free of charge. As a photo sharing app, it boasts several features that claims to make it into an invaluable tool for artists. But is this a major release, or a forgettable tool? Here's a quick review.

Adobe® Revel™

First, Adobe Revel is only available on a couple of platforms, namely the MacOS desktop, iPhone and iPad. This means if you aren't using one of those, then this isn't an app for you. Once you install Revel, you will find that it looks very similar to other apps you may have used in the past. The first thing you need to do is login, and that can be done using an Adobe ID, Facebook or Google account. Then you gain access to the main interface, which gives you the basic features that this app contains.

The app itself is very basic. You can import images from the device itself, and store them in galleries. You can create new folders and sort them the way you want, and you can apply basic filters to those images. The app is also tightly integrated to the web presence at adoberevel.com, which gives you a web based view of your images. One nice thing is that by default, the app will read the images metadata and can sort them by the date the photos were taken, or images created.

The problem with Adobe Revel is that it simply replicates what many other apps are already doing. The main point of a sharing app is to actually share that content with other people. Right now, very few people use Revel since it just came out. People who do share a lot of photos already use something like Instagram, or simply share directly to Facebook, which recently added the same type of filters available in the other apps. Revel doesn't add any significant feature that would make it a compelling tool for artists or photographers.

Finally, while the app itself is free, you only gain access to unlimited uploads for the first 30 days. After that, you need a pro account at $5.99 per month to upload more than a basic amount of images. In the end, there doesn't seem to be a lot of purpose to this app, unless you really want to stick with Adobe products. Even something like the Flickr app from Yahoo, which was recently improved, would be a better choice for most people.

Adobe acquires Behance

Fri, Dec 21 2012 5:49:59 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Behance today announced that they have been acquired by Adobe, with a move by the software giant to expand its online reach.

Behance Network was founded in 2006 and now counts over a million users, artists who display their art on the site in order to share and sell them. The post specifies that the New York based team will remain together, while the site itself will be integrated with Adobe's Creative Cloud, in order to more seamlessly share works between Adobe products and Behance.

As part of their plans for the future, the announcement states that they want to empower creative people and teams to make ideas happen, and they will now be able to leverage Adobe's resources to further build Behance, making their software users more collaborative and in sync with the future of creative workflow.

New features for Adobe Creative Cloud

Wed, Dec 12 2012 13:40:47 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Adobe announced a series of new features today on its blog for members of the Creative Cloud subscription package.

The new perks mostly apply to Photoshop users, and are being released exclusively for Creative Cloud paying subscribers (except Retina support), following the company's earlier promise to get new benefits for their subscription customers. In all, a dozen new features will be available including:

* Retina Display Support
* Smart Object support for Blur Gallery and Liquify
* Powerful CSS support for web design
* Workflow improvements
* Conditional Actions
* Improved 3D effects
* Image-based lighting enhancements
* Enhanced details for textures

The company also released a promotional video touting some of these features:

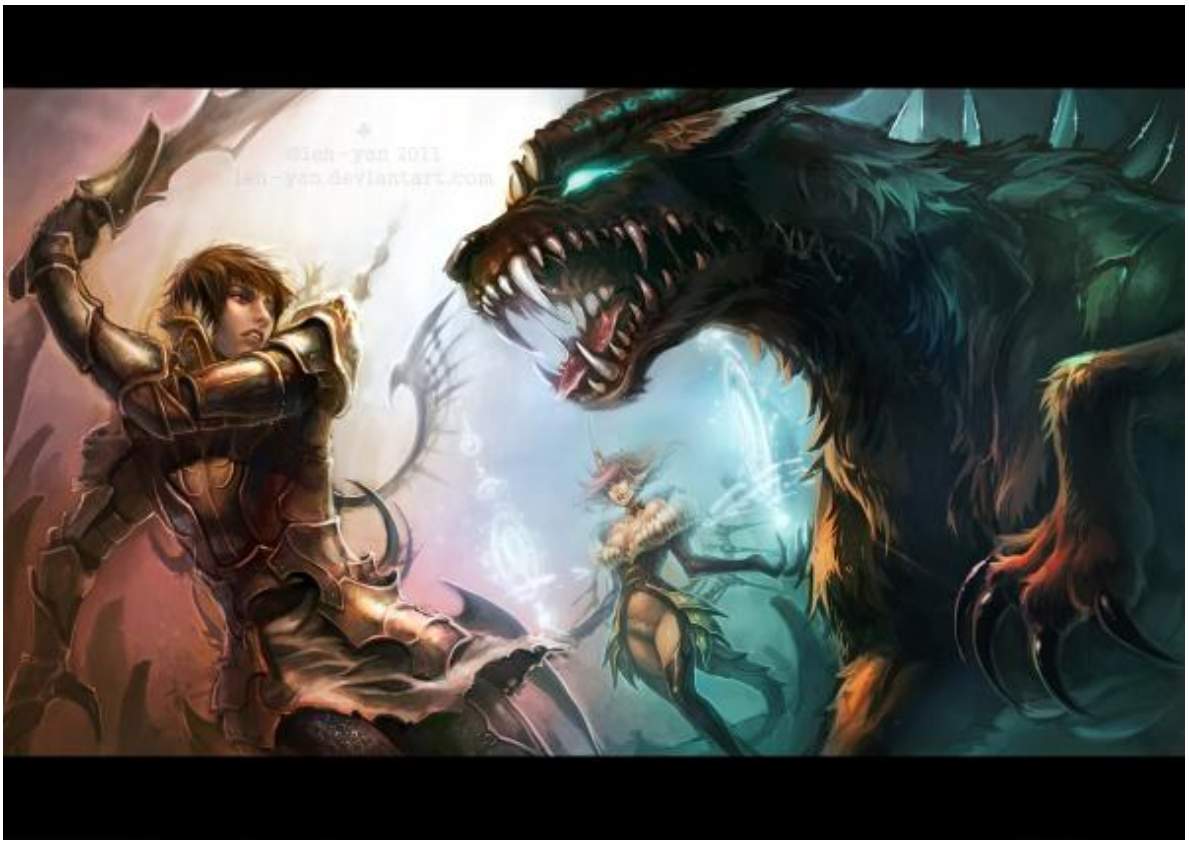
Artist showcase: Len-yan

Wed, Nov 28 2012 23:19:50 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today, we're happy to feature the art of Lena, also known as Len-yan, an artist from Poland.

©len-yan 2011
len-yan.deviantart.com

LEN-YAN



Nuke lighting workflow video

Thu, Nov 15 2012 10:41:19 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video, the team behind Nuke, a popular VFX software, talks about the new lighting functions in the latest release.

Artist showcase: Perla

Thu, Nov 15 2012 8:05:57 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today, we're glad to feature the photo manipulations of Perla, a digital artist from Russia.

5 gifts to get an artist for the Holidays

Thu, Nov 15 2012 2:13:17 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

The Holidays are upon us, with Thanksgiving coming up and then Christmas, Hanukkah and so on. The season means lower prices, and gifts for all our friends and families. But what could you get for an artist, someone who likes to create content? Here are 5 gift ideas of things you may want to get for a creative person.

Wacom Bamboo Pen Tablet

A pen tablet is one of the most important tools for any digital artist, especially if they spend a lot of time in Photoshop or some other painting program. There's no question that using a digital pen is much preferred by most content creators rather than using a mouse, and if you know someone who is just starting out and doesn't own one yet, you can get a good quality Wacom tablet for around $80. The Bamboo models are some of the most popular and well respected out there, and always make a great gift for someone who doesn't have a pen tablet yet, or who may have an older model.

Adobe Creative Cloud subscription

Adobe, like many other large computer software makers, is starting to transition from selling applications to providing subscription services. The company calls it Adobe Creative Cloud and for a monthly fee, you can download any of the CS6 applications, and gain access to any new update and release. For $49 a month, this may prove to be a cheaper option than going out and buying all of the apps, and could be a great gift for the Holidays.

iPad Mini

Tablets aren't new, but it has taken some time for graphics apps to appear on them. Now, the iPad provides several well known professional apps for painting, drawing, and even modeling in 3D. But perhaps you used to think of the iPad as an expensive device. Now, the iPad mini is both smaller, which means it's more portable, and it's also cheaper starting at around $325. There's also Android options, some of them being cheaper even, but you should check out what art apps are available.

CGTextures membership

After buying the applications, the one thing many artists end up needing is textures, and often a lot of them. One of the most popular textures site is CGTextures, with over 80,000 items and growing. They offer medium resolution textures for all, but provide high res versions as well to members. Membership starts at around $75 per year, and allows you to download a larger quantity of images which can be used in creating all sorts of art, from photo-manipulations to 3D renders.

DeviantART membership

Many artists like to display their works online, and DeviantART is one of the most popular art community. This site allows you to upload images for free, but with a membership, starting at $30 per year, you gain access to additional features, and can forgo ads. This is a great gift idea for an aspiring artist who wants to get known.

World of Tanks breakdown video

Wed, Nov 14 2012 22:01:26 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this short breakdown video, the animators behind World of Tanks show some of the CGI work in their latest game trailer.

Unity 4 released

Wed, Nov 14 2012 21:47:37 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

After spending some time in beta, Unity 3D version 4 has finally been released for all. A long list of new features makes it a worthwhile upgrade for game designers who want to take advantage of the latest technologies in this popular game engine.

Unity is a well known engine for making games, especially for mobile platforms. With release 4, the company brings in several new and improved features:
* An all new animation system
* DirectX 11 rendering
* Updated image effects
* More realism for mobile games
* A fine-tuned Shuriken Particle System
* More detail and control with lightmapped scenes
* Refined profiling for mobile
* New publishing platforms
* Cross-platform dynamic fonts
* Change cursors on demand with new Hardware cursor API
* New Add Component button
* Fast asset search and management
And more.

The basic version of Unity is available now for free. A trial of the pro version is also available, and costs $1,500.

Assassin's Creed 3 concept art

Tue, Nov 13 2012 20:21:11 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Gilles Beloeil, a senior concept artist and digital matte painter at Ubisoft Montreal, posted a couple of concept images from the game Assassin's Creed 3 on his web site. They showcase some of the scenes from the popular franchise, and show the character in action.

Mozilla Popcorn Maker

Tue, Nov 13 2012 4:56:23 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The promise of rich, interactive media is something a lot of designers and content creators have been working towards, and now thanks to a new project called Popcorn Maker from Mozilla, video and interactive elements can be seamlessly mixed and easily published on the web.

Let's say you create videos or animations on the web, but would like to add context, such as annotations that appear on the video, links to Wikipedia articles, interactive maps, or news updates. YouTube already allows some of that, but it's static and doesn't support much interactivity. With Popcorn Maker, people can create a project from a video or animation file, and then add interactivity elements. Because it's integrated using HTML5, the elements can be live. For example, you may want to show real time updates on top of your video, to show the latest news about the topic you're covering.

Here's an example from the Mozilla site:

Top Windows 8 graphics software

Mon, Nov 12 2012 23:23:18 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Windows 8 is not only the latest release of Microsoft's operating system, but also brings in a brand new user interface, along with an app store providing new *metro* style apps. Already, thousands of apps are being added to this online marketplace, including graphics and design software. But what are some of the top apps out there for artists and content creators?

First, if you look around the listings in the Windows Store, you will see a lot of usual names. Even though Microsoft said only new apps will be listed in the store, the fact is that desktop software can be found there as well, such as Adobe Photoshop, Corel Draw, and so on. Basically, three types of apps can be seen: Desktop apps, free apps, and paid apps.

If we ignore the traditional products we know well and focus on new, Windows 8 *metro* apps, the selection becomes much smaller. The simple fact is that there isn't a whole lot of choice. The store doesn't even have a graphics or art section, with these apps being spread around the productivity, lifestyle and photo categories. Then, there's also a lot of fairly simple, uninteresting apps, like *wallpaper daily* and *sexy celebrities*.

There are however a couple of items of note. The first one is a name you may have seen before: **Autodesk SketchBook Express**. This is a port of their popular iOS and Android app, and it does seem like they produced a fairly well done app, allowing users to paint and draw on the screen. SketchBook works just as well with a mouse on a desktop, as with fingers on a Windows 8 tablet. All of the options are available in the lower left corner, and images can be shared online.

Another app worthy of mention is called **Colors!** It's also a drawing app, but features a lot less options. It's clearly meant for a younger audience, and would be a great starting tool for a young aspiring artist on a Windows 8 tablet. Finally, if you're into filters like what Instagram offers, you may want to check out **PhotoFunia**, an app allowing you to apply a series of filters to your images.

The bottom line however is that the selection of art or graphics apps in the Windows 8 store is nothing to write home about, at least not yet. Just like the iPad and Android tablets, it took some time before we started seeing some really interesting apps, like painting programs, VFX software or even 3D modelers. It's likely to be the same with Windows 8. Fortunately, unless you run on an ARM platform, you can always go back to the desktop and use all the desktop software you know and love.

MakeHuman 1.0 alpha 7 features video

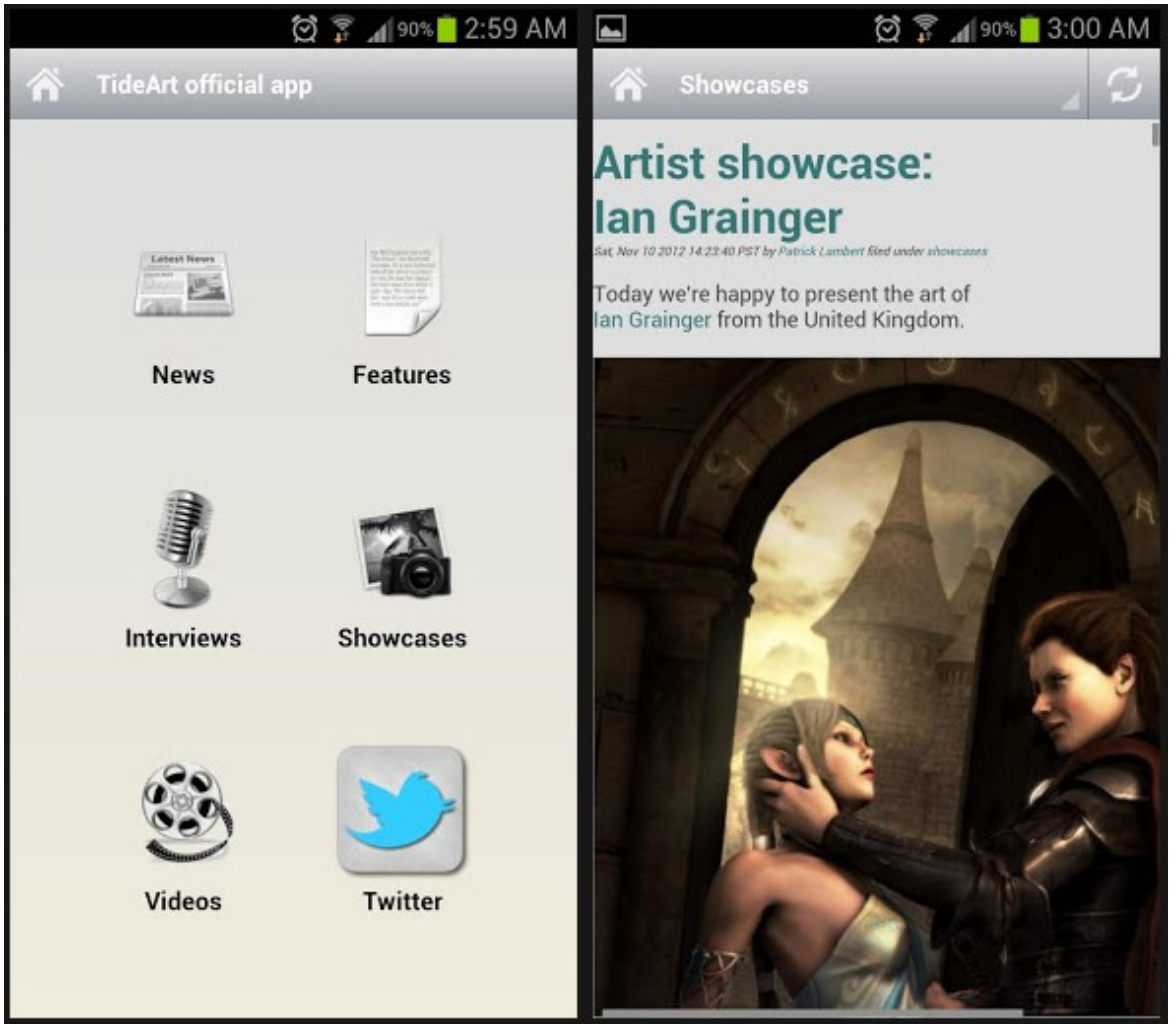
Mon, Nov 12 2012 21:39:32 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

MakeHuman, a free and open source character posing program has entered version 1 alpha 7, and this video shows off some of the many new features.

If you produce content, you should have a mobile app

Mon, Nov 12 2012 12:13:12 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

The old saying used to be that *if you produce content, you need a web presence*. This was one of the large moves of the beginning of this century, with artists and designers starting to look at the web to publish their works cheaply and easily. Now, if you produce content, especially digital art, then you would be crazy not to have a web site, or at least some type of web presence. But for the past couple of years, it's become clear that the mobile space is where innovation is going, from smartphones to tablets. So is the saying still applicable now? I believe it is, and because of several reasons, if you produce content, you may want to look at building your own mobile app.



The promise of the mobile web is that whatever your web presence is, it should be just as usable on a mobile platform. Unfortunately, that just isn't the case quite yet. HTML5 is starting to change this in a big way, but for now, even web sites designed for mobiles can be harder to use than their desktop versions. Also, because of the App Store and Android Marketplace, people have become used to getting apps for everything they do on their phones, for good or for bad. Ideally, you shouldn't need to rely on having a dedicated app, especially if you just want to reach new markets for your content. But the good news is that there are a lot of services that have appeared and now make it really easy to make such apps.

One service which offers people with no coding experience a way to make mobile apps is called Andromo, and is the one I used to make the Official TideArt App, without touching a line of code. This is just one of many such services however, and they all work in the same exact way. Basically, as an artist, designer, or content creator of some sort, you have digital content that you want to get into people's hands, and you don't want to learn Java or C# to create an app. What those sites offer is a back-end service that will create the app for you, based on templates that they offer, and the data you input into their web site. Then, usually for a fee, they will produce the needed file for you to publish your app.

The step by step process is fairly straight forward. First you register for an account, then you create a new project on their site with the name of your app, description, icon, and so on. You then get to pick the style with colors and font sizes. Some of these services provide a live preview on the site, but not all. Once you're done building the app through their system, you can build it, which simply means their back-end system will create the code and compile it into a format that mobile devices will understand, an APK file for Android and a Package file for iOS. It's best if you have a phone to test it yourself, or you can use an emulator.

Some of the features offered will vary. Usually, you have to follow a basic template, and the content you can put in the app can include things like web pages, RSS feeds, Twitter or Facebook integration, image galleries, information pages, and so on. Then, you either have to pay for the app to be created, which usually runs around $25 to $45, or some services will do it for free but place ads in the app. Some sites will create apps for Android, others for iOS, and the great thing is that inside of an hour, without ever learning to code, you can have an app that phone users will be able to find and download in order to see your

content.

There are a few caveats to keep in mind. First, some of these services will publish your app for you. This can be a problem, because if they publish it, you need to keep paying them, since the app will be in their name. It's best if their system can send you the built app and you publish it yourself. If you do however, remember that both Google and Apple require you to register as a developer in order to publish apps, which involves a small fee, currently $25 for Google and $99 for Apple. Apple also requires you to own a Mac in order to process these files.

Overall, some of these services make it very easy to create simple, content-oriented apps. Don't expect to make games or involved software, but for a content creator, it can be a great way to add yet another distribution channel to your portfolio.

Blender 2.65 nearly complete

Mon, Nov 12 2012 8:10:48 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

After the latest developer's meeting, it seems like the upcoming Blender 3D release is almost completed, with the team now working on fixing a few of the last bugs remaining, with several of the important sub-systems working and ready to ship.

According to the developers, it seems like there is now less than 70 bugs remaining before the version can be called gold, or ready to ship. Release 2.65 is on track for the planned date, with bug fixing being the last priority. Some features however had to be cut and left for the 2.66 road map, including Python nodes and Bullet integration.

If all goes according to plan, we should see the final version this coming December.

Devil May Cry making of video

Sun, Nov 11 2012 21:29:05 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under videos

In this video, some of the talents behind the latest Devil May Cry game speak of taking on the role of their various characters, and show some of the motion capture work that was done.

Artist showcase: Ian Grainger

Sat, Nov 10 2012 22:23:40 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're happy to present the art of Ian Grainger from the United Kingdom.

IAN GRAINGER

Nuke 7 improvements video

Sat, Nov 10 2012 8:33:43 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The Foundry, the team behind the popular NUKE post-processing software, posted a video showing some of the new features in their latest release.

Film chart of the past 100 years

Fri, Nov 9 2012 21:07:37 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Designer Larry Gormley created an interesting info graphic mapping 2,000 influential movies over the past 100 years, classified in 20 categories. The image is shown on their web site and can be bought as a print.

Some of the criteria for inclusion are whether the title won an important award such as the best picture Academy Award, achieved critical acclaim according to recognized film critics, is considered to be key genre films by experts, or attained box office success. Some of the categories include animation, action, sci-fi, crime, neo-noir, and more.

It's also interesting to see how popular a certain genre was in a particular time period, like the raise of western movies in the 1950s, and the return of musicals in the late 1990s.

Elder Scrolls Online developer diary

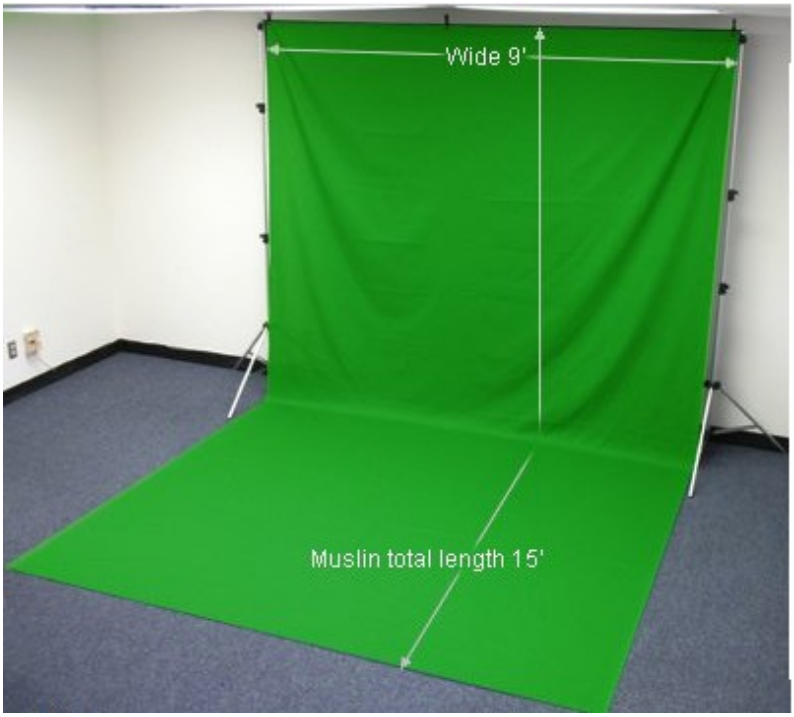
Fri, Nov 9 2012 3:14:24 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under videos

In this video, the developers behind the upcoming *Elder Scrolls Online* talk about some of the challenges of adapting a single player series to the MMO genre, from the art style to social aspects and gameplay.

Making your own inexpensive green screen setup

Fri, Nov 9 2012 2:25:48 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

If you're a VFX artist, or work with video, you most likely know what a green screen is. Basically, it's a back drop that you can use in film and video productions to provide a plain color, so that when you bring the footage in a post-processing software, you can easily replace that back drop with something else. Here, we'll see how to make your own inexpensive green screen setup.



There are three important things to keep in mind about making a green screen set:
* Having a good fabric
* Getting the screen as smooth as possible
* Having good, even lighting.

So to start with, you need a screen. Usually, these are made of fabric, and there are a lot of different models and costs. For a fairly small 9 ft by 15 ft setup, you can pick up a Chromakey Green Muslin Screen on Amazon for about $35. There are also a lot of other models that you can find around this price, and they all work fine for small budget productions. The main disadvantage you will get with buying a cheaper fabric is that you may have to work a bit more to get the wrinkles out, and the color may fade over time, making it harder to key against it. Otherwise, this type of fabric works fine.

One thing to note is that most of the green screens aren't sold with any sort of attachment or support. You will need to get it up against a wall somehow. The easiest way to do that is to attach supports to a wall, but if you don't have a wall you can use, simply buy a set of supports like the SP2000 Backdrop Background Support Stand which costs around $59. The benefit is that if you ever want to film outdoors, or at another location, you can bring your setup with you. Usually, most of these products come in a way that's easy to carry and easy to setup. Simply follow the instructions and use the spring loaded attaches to bring the bars up to hold your screen.

Once your green screen is set, you need to make sure it's extremely plain and smooth. One trick is to use an iron on the fabric in order to remove any wrinkle. Then, make sure the screen is vertical. You can use a level to make sure it's exactly at 90 degrees. Make sure you place the bright green side of your screen in front, and avoid having that side touch the floor so it doesn't get dirty unnecessarily.

The last step in getting your own green screen set is to have proper lighting. This will make it much easier to key correctly once you're in your post-processing software. The goal is to have the whole screen as bright and as evenly lit as possible. You want no cold or hot spot. A good setup includes 3 lights minimum, with 5 lights being best. If you use tungsten lights, make sure you have tungsten to daylight filters. If you use florescent lights, make sure you remove the diffuser panels in front of them.

With some budget for your lights, one popular choice is FloLight, which are lights that provide the right color and temperature, can be mounted any way you want, and can be adjusted in many different ways. However, you can easily get a much cheaper setup simply by visiting your local hardware store. You can get long tube fluorescent lights for around $35. One important thing to remember is not to mix cold and hot

lights, because they will produce different types of lighting. So don't mix halogen and fluorescent.

Finally, once you have you green screen and your lights, you can start filming. Your resulting green doesn't have to be exactly *chroma green*, as long as it's as close as possible. Whether you use Adobe After Effects, Final Cut Pro or another post-processing software, you'll be able to key out the green, and if your setup was well done, you will get a good result, and all of that for less than $100 (minus camera, supports and actors!)

Autodesk releases 123D

Thu, Nov 8 2012 21:16:03 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

This morning, Autodesk announced the availability of 123D, their free design application available on the web, desktop and mobile. With it, anyone can have access to a 3D design software for free, in an easy to use format.

123D has been in beta for a while now, and has evolved into a fairly comprehensive solution. With the official release, Autodesk is hoping to bring even more people to the world of 3D design, something they couldn't necessarily do when needing expensive CAD software.

To get started, you simply have to go to the web site and install a plugin in order to run the web app, or download the equivalent from your tablet's App Store. The app provides various tools like primitives, engine parts, construction parts, and so on. While the actual modeling tools are few, the company promises to keep improving the app over the coming months.

Why every content creator needs ImageMagick

Thu, Nov 8 2012 2:01:01 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

There are software programs that are well known, and that any artist or designer has in his or her toolbox. Adobe Photoshop comes to mind, being the most popular digital graphics software by far. One name you may not know much about however is ImageMagick. Yet, this small, free and open source application can be used to make your life much easier by automating tasks that would otherwise be very hard or time consuming to do. Here's why you may want to get to know ImageMagick.

ImageMagick is one of these rare tools that few people know about, but the ones who do always consider it an invaluable resource. The reason is

because this isn't a fancy graphics program, in fact there's no graphical user interface at all, it's a command line tool. But while that may be daunting at first, ImageMagick is actually fairly easy to use, and the fact that it is run from a command line means you can also integrate it into scripts, which is what many people end up doing.

The first thing you should do in order to get started is go to the download page and get the software. They have a binary for almost every platform, with a Windows installer near the bottom of the page. Getting it installed on your system is simple, usually a matter of a few clicks. The site explains what to do for every platform that they support.

Now that it's installed, we can see examples of things you can do with this tool. Let's say you have an image in PNG format and you want to convert it to JPEG. Simply open up a command line by typing *cmd* in the search bar of your Start menu, then navigate to whichever folder your files are in, for example:

```
cd C:\my files
```

Once that's done, you can use the *convert* command to convert your image into a new format:

```
convert image.png newimage.jpg
```

Now obviously, if this is all you wanted to do, then you may be thinking that this would be a lot faster if you simply opened the image in Photoshop, or even Paint. But this is just the beginning. Let's say you wanted to resize the image by 50% also:

```
convert image.png -resize 50% newimage.jpg
```

That's more useful, but again it could still be done easily in a graphics application. But let's say you have 100 images, and you need to quickly create a series of thumbnails for them, at 40x40 resolution. Simply place them all inside of a folder, then use:

```
convert *.jpg -size 40x40 thumb.jpg
```

This will create your 100 thumbnails with names starting with *thumb*, and the whole process will take seconds. Try to do that in Paint! If you're going to do a lot of batch processing, another command you should know about is *mogrify*. You may have noticed the previous command created a series of thumbnails with the names thumb-0, thumb-1, and so on. But what if you wanted the images to simply be resized onto themselves, without changing the file name? This is what *mogrify* is for. As such, you need to be careful, because it will overwrite any existing file without asking for confirmation. So always back your original files up. Here is the command to convert every JPEG in the folder into 40x40 thumbnails:

```
mogrify -thumbnail 40x40 *.jpg
```

Similarly, you can also use the command to convert every JPEG into PNG files. This time it will write new files of the same name but with a different extension, overwriting any existing file with that extension:

```
mogrify -format png *.jpg
```

So as you can see, if you deal with a large number of images, chances are that at some point you will need to apply a filter, resize, change format, or do something to a bunch of them, and that's where ImageMagick comes into use. But we're just scratching the surface. The site has thousands of examples of things you can do with this software, but here are a couple of useful commands. Let's say you have a batch of JPEG images, and you want to send them to someone. A good way to do this is by converting them into a PDF. Here's how to do it:

```
convert *.jpg myimages.pdf
```

You can also crop an image so that you only see a rectangle of 40x40, starting at 20 pixels from the top, and 15 pixels from the left:

```
convert image.jpg -crop 40x40+15+20 newimage.jpg
```

Now let's add some blur, with a radius of 2 and sigma of 2:

```
convert image.jpg -blur 2x2 newimage.jpg
```

You can even draw things on an image, such as a line or text. The following command will draw a small circle centered at 10x10:

```
convert image.jpg -draw 'circle 10,10 50,50' newimage.jpg
```

Finally, you can create an animated GIF with ImageMagick. This command will make a looping animation with a series of JPEG image files, with 30 hundredths of a second delay between each frame:

```
convert -delay 30 -loop 0 *.jpg myanimation.gif
```

These examples could go on forever, but hopefully by now you realize just how powerful ImageMagick is. And because everything is done through the command line, it's very easy to integrate these commands into scripts or whatever workflow you use. Hopefully, next time you're trying to make a change to an image that your graphics program can't easily do, or want to do batch processing of some kind, you will know where to go.

Injustice developer diary video

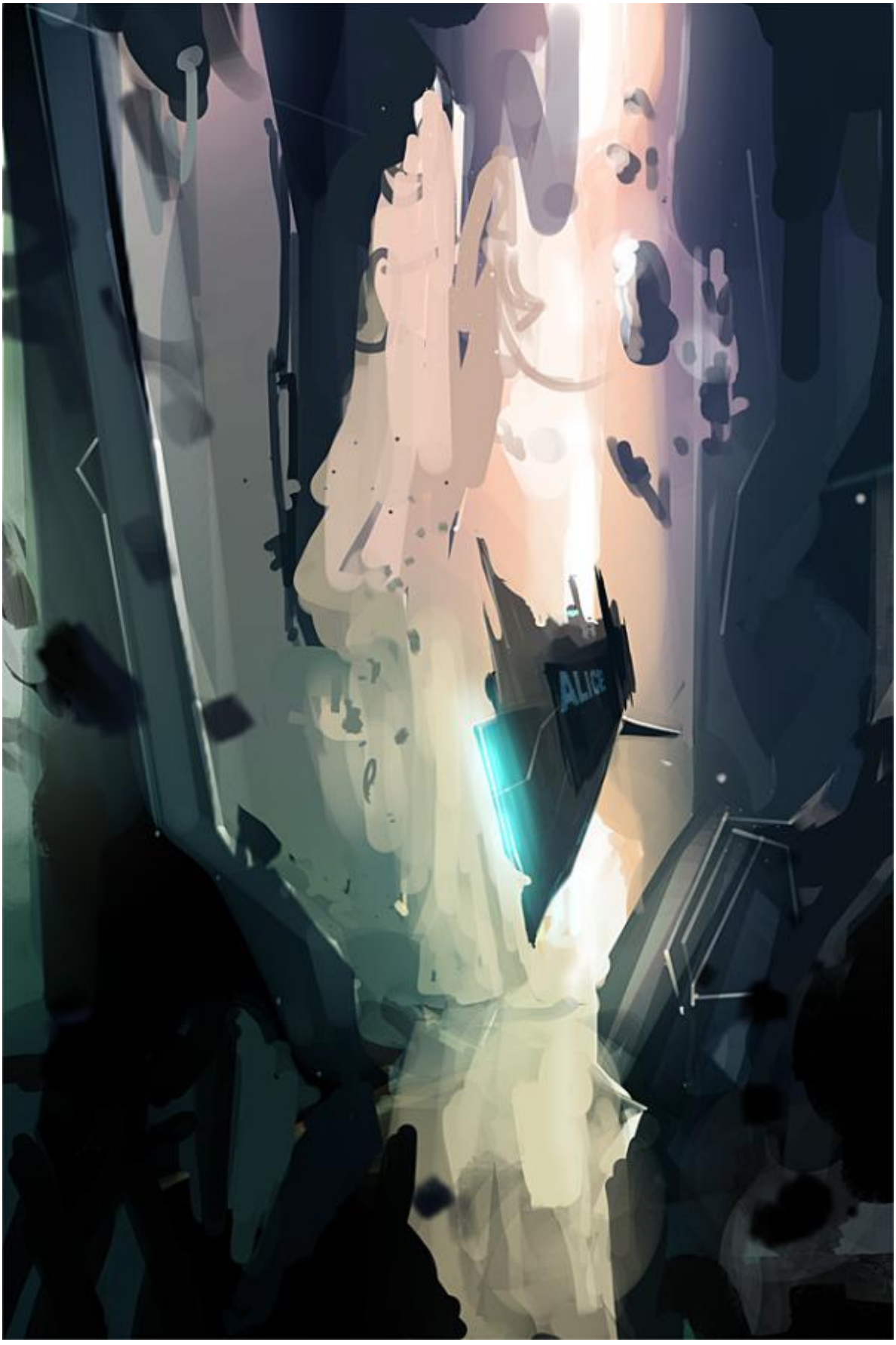
Thu, Nov 8 2012 0:58:22 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under videos

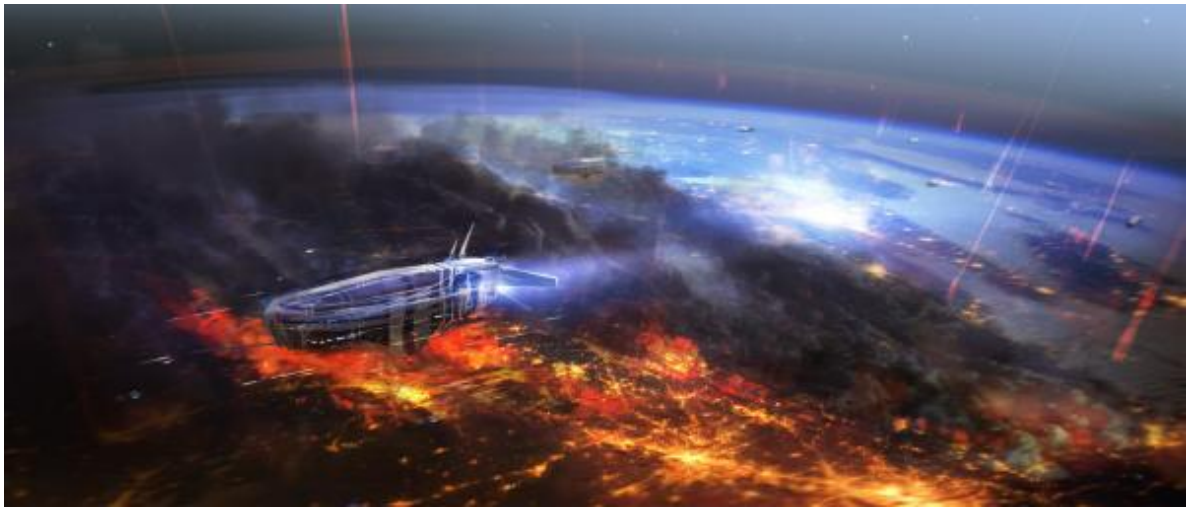
The team behind *Injustice: Gods Among Us*, the latest superheros game from WB, talks about how they approached creating a game that stayed true to the comic versions.

Artist showcase: MacRebisz

Wed, Nov 7 2012 10:24:59 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to showcase MacRebisz, a digital artist making landscapes images, sci-fi vehicles and more.


ALICE



Lucasfilm faces new pregnancy discrimination claim

Wed, Nov 7 2012 1:16:29 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Lucasfilm is making the news again this week with the Hollywood Reporter reporting a new alleged case of pregnancy discrimination against the company's Singapore subsidiary.

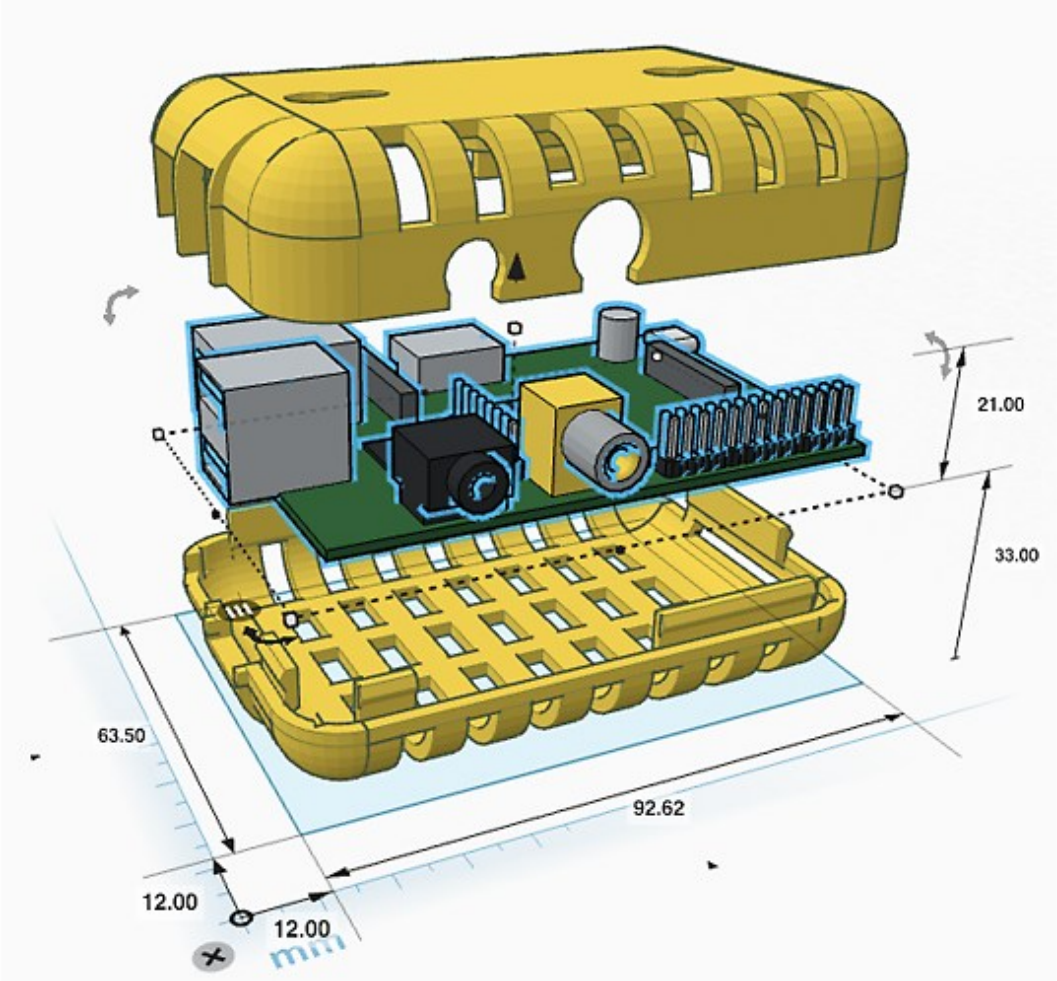
The claim comes from VFX artist Luis Pages who described in a long blog post how his wife became pregnant, and then faced medical complications, which led to the company firing him without explanation after he had received permission to take time off in order to visit his wife.

This is not the first time Lucasfilm has faced an accusation involving pregnancy. In 2010, the company lost a pregnancy discrimination and wrongful termination lawsuit in the US. The company refused to comment on this case but did say that *''There's more to the story''*, according to the report.

Tinkercad review

Wed, Nov 7 2012 0:03:57 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Most 3D modeling applications are big software which require a lot of system resources. But last year, a company decided to see if it was possible to design a basic 3D CAD software that would run through a web browser. They succeeded, and Tinkercad was born. Tinkercad is CAD solution which allows anyone to create 3D models through an intuitive interface, without having to download anything. Here's a short review of some of the features it offers, and how good the result is.



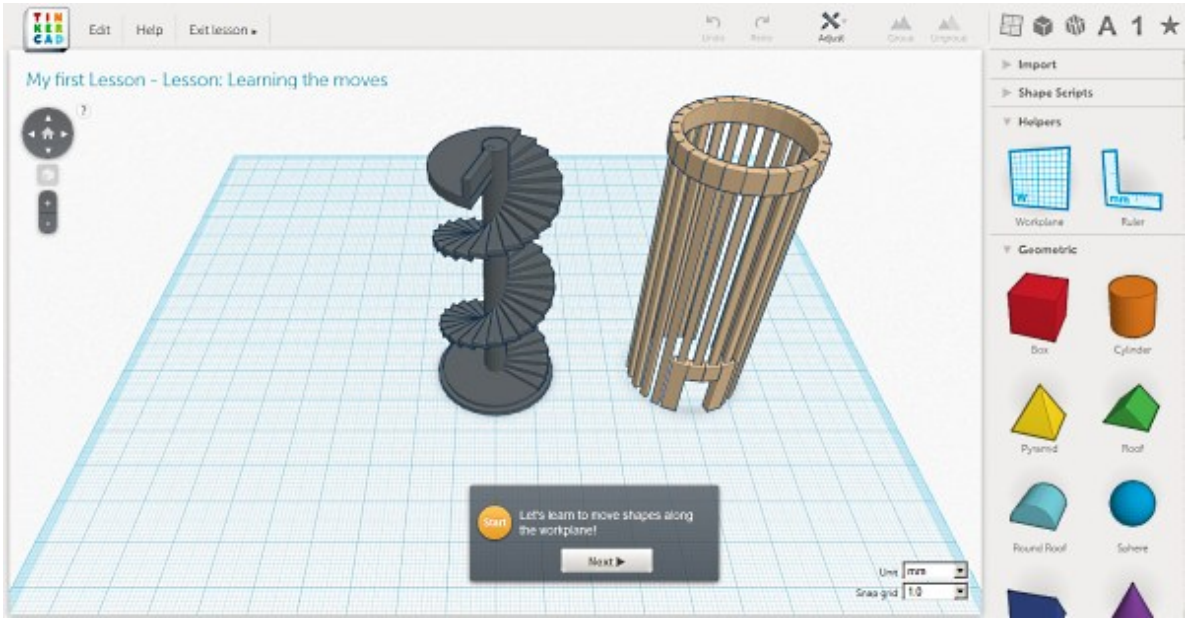
The main purpose behind Tinkercad is to create models that will be used for 3D printing. We know that 3D printing is something that is quickly becoming very big and well known. With home printers like the Replicator 2, anyone can print any model they want in their own home, and end up with physical objects. But for those who may not be 3D modelers, or have a computer powerful enough to run CAD software, that

may be a problem. Also, you may not want to buy an actual 3D printer if all you need is a single model printed out. These are the things Tinkercad solve pretty nicely.

First, Tinkercad can be used for free with the most basic plan. You will have access to the editor, and can play with all of the tools and figures. After that, the site offers various payment plans if you want to do serious work using the web app. The personal plan is $19 per month and provides additional features like lessons, 3D mesh importing and scripts. There's also team and business plans available. Once your model is done, you can either download it locally, or use various 3rd party 3D printing services to print it for you.

The editor itself is fairly powerful and very easy to use. In fact the ease of use may be its most important characteristic. Video tutorials are integrated in the interface, as well as hints. The work area looks like any other modeling software, and you can move around using your mouse buttons, as you would expected. In the toolbar, you have access to all the usual primitives like a box, sphere, cylinder, text, torus, and even *holes* to do boolean functions.

While all the basic functions of an editor are there, don't expect anything more advanced. In fact, that's pretty much where Tinkercad stops being useful. You can't do any kind of NURBS modeling, or sculpting, or even texturing, because the goal of the project is to create models that will be used for 3D printing. If that's your goal, or even if you just need to model a quick item really quickly and don't need to do anything more complex, then Tinkercad is a great solution. It's also a great demonstration of what can be done in a web browser, and it's not hard to imagine that someone could go beyond what's available here and add even more powerful functions.



Pros:
* Easy to use interface
* Everything is done inside of a browser
* Direct support for 3D printing

Cons:
* It's only a basic modeler
* Payment needed to import a 3D mesh

The company behind Tinkercad is constantly improving the app, with the last update being less than 2 weeks old, where they added a new Inspector function which gathers all the things you can tweak for each shape into one place. If 3D printing is something you're interested in, or just want to create a 3D model without leaving your browser, then you may want to check out Tinkercad.

Indigo 3.4 released

Tue, Nov 6 2012 19:15:33 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Indigo 3.4 has been released today by Glare Technologies. Indigo Renderer is an unbiased, physically based and photorealistic 3D renderer which simulates the physics of light to achieve image realism. It's fairly popular for architecture renderings.

Some of the new features in release 3.4 include:
* Section planes
* Orthographic camera
* Normal maps
* Less noise, more speed
* IES improvements
* Exporter improvements

For those wishing to upgrade, Indigo 3.4 is free for Indigo 3.0 owners, and the new version is on sale until November 23th.

Introduction to Mocha HitFilm video

Tue, Nov 6 2012 19:06:54 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The people behind HitFilm, a video editing solution, talks about Mocha, a new feature available in HitFilm 2 Ultimate which allows better tracking of video like handling lens distorted footage and format support enhancements.

Halo 4 concept art

Tue, Nov 6 2012 18:59:31 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under news

BoingBoing has published some concept art from Halo 4, and also talks about a new book called Awakening, available on Amazon and featuring art from the game.

Increase Maya and 3DS MAX interoperability

Tue, Nov 6 2012 18:52:36 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

This video shows off Alembic, a new plugin for Maya and 3DS MAX to increase interoperability.

Tears of Steel VFX breakdown video

Mon, Nov 5 2012 19:25:50 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The team behind Tears of Steel, a movie created using Blender 3D, published this VFX breakdown video.

Blender Developer Meeting roundup

Mon, Nov 5 2012 8:45:47 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

On Sunday, the core team behind Blender 3D, the most popular open source 3D modeling software out there, had their developers' meeting, and some news items came out about the upcoming versions of Blender, such as the Blender 2.65 release target and the 2.7x and 2.8x branches.

Version 2.65 is the next major release of Blender, and the current plan seems to be having a Release Candidate in December, with final release soon after. Dynamic topology sculpting, one feature that was scheduled for 2.65, will likely be pushed back to 2.66. Some other features are going well and are likely to make it into 2.65, like Open Shading Language and script nodes.

A road map was established for the 2.7x and 2.8x releases, with 2.7 focusing on a number of steps to tackle various long lasting issues in Blender. This includes parts of the animation system, physics, ways objects are drawn, rendering, etc. The Blender Game Engine may also get some improvements. The 2.8x series will be kept more stable and compatible again (like 2.6x after 2.5x).

Red Tails VFX beakdown video

Mon, Nov 5 2012 4:16:18 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Redeo FX, the company behind the special effects in the movie Red Tails, posted a VFX breakdown video showing some of the shots made.

Kon-Tiki VFX breakdown video

Mon, Nov 5 2012 4:07:37 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

This is a 10 minutes VFX breakdown video put together by the team behind the Norwegian movie Kon-Tiki.

Artist showcase: Laura Stark

Sun, Nov 4 2012 23:48:22 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature the photo-manipulation artworks of Laura Stark.

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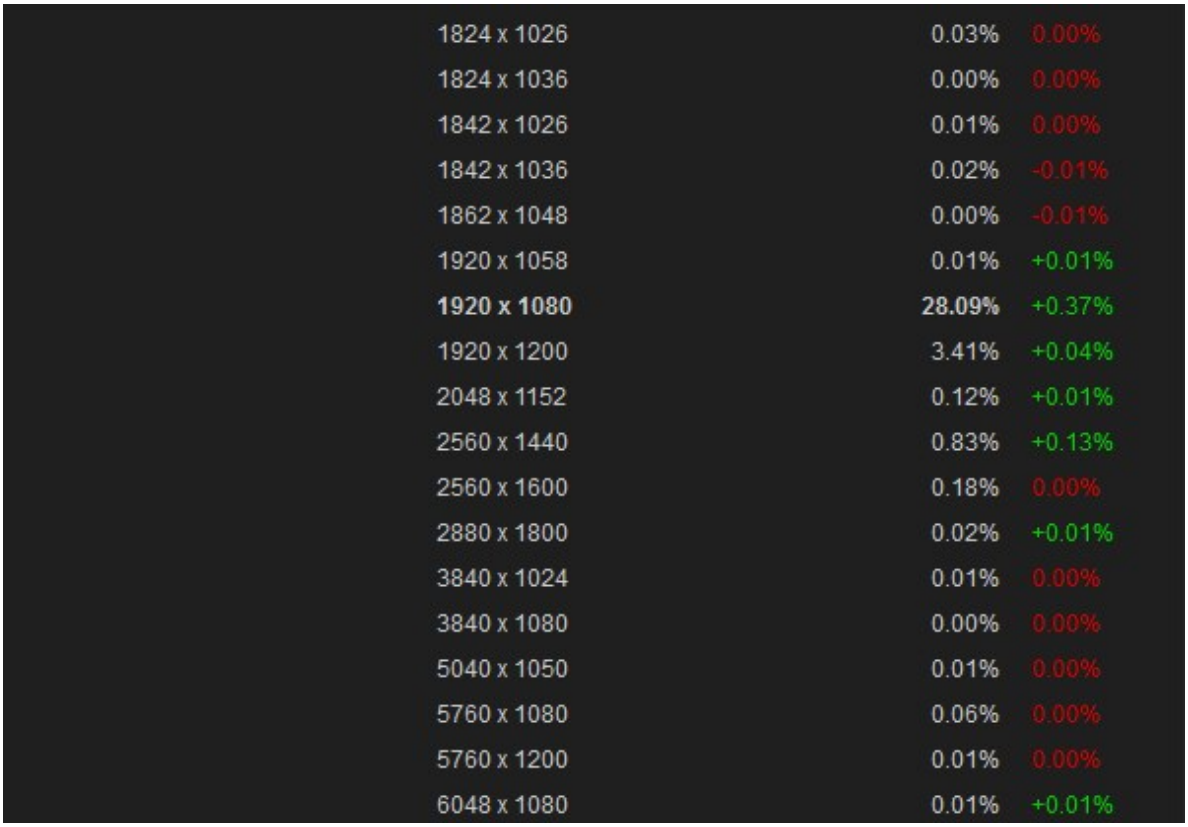
Web designers: Thinking about screen sizes

Sat, Nov 3 2012 21:27:48 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Many artists and designers create content for the web. As such, you may be in part responsible for the final look of a site on a user's browser, whether it be your own site or that of a client. This is why knowing as much as possible about that browser is important, including the display resolutions people use.



1824 x 1026	0.03%	0.00%
1824 x 1036	0.00%	0.00%
1842 x 1026	0.01%	0.00%
1842 x 1036	0.02%	-0.01%
1862 x 1048	0.00%	-0.01%
1920 x 1058	0.01%	+0.01%
1920 x 1080	**28.09%**	+0.37%
1920 x 1200	3.41%	+0.04%
2048 x 1152	0.12%	+0.01%
2560 x 1440	0.83%	+0.13%
2560 x 1600	0.18%	0.00%
2880 x 1800	0.02%	+0.01%
3840 x 1024	0.01%	0.00%
3840 x 1080	0.00%	0.00%
5040 x 1050	0.01%	0.00%
5760 x 1080	0.06%	0.00%
5760 x 1200	0.01%	0.00%
6048 x 1080	0.01%	+0.01%

There are two ways to create a site, when it comes to width. There are fixed sites, which have a certain size and don't vary, and then there are variable sites, which adjust themselves based on the user's browser size. There's no bad way to do it, and you can make arguments for both methods, but variable sites tend to adapt better to various screen sizes, with elements on the screen repositioning themselves to fit the resolution of the user, and consequently have become more popular in recent years.

Even with a variable site however, chances are it looks better at a certain resolution. As a content creator, you need to know what size to focus on when creating graphics, banners, tables, and so on. For that, there are two useful resources out there. The first is the Steam Hardware Survey, which is a great resource showing the hardware configuration of Steam users. Because there are so many people using Steam, it gives you a good idea of what computer users use. If you go to the display part, you can see that the lowest common denominator is now at 1024 x 768 pixels, with 4%. Other popular resolutions are 1280 x 800 with 3%, 1280 x 1024 with 9%, 1366 x 768 with 18%, 1440 x 900 with 7%, 1600 x 900 with 7%, 1680 x 1050 with 9%, and 1920 x 1080 with 28%.

Another useful place to look at is the W3Schools Browser Display Statistics page. Their page shows that as of last January, 13% still use 1024 x 768, and only 1% below that. So from those stats, it seems clear that 1024 x 768 should be the baseline for most sites, with a clear trend going towards higher resolutions, mainly 1920 x 1080. This can help you design your assets so they look right for most people.

Lastly, one particularly interesting feature that has recently started to become very popular is something called *responsive design*. This is a technique that reformats a web site based on the user's resolution, mostly useful for when you switch to drastically different resolutions, like tablets and smartphones. Basically, instead of making a separate mobile site, you can specify that your site should change for anyone with a resolution lower than 1000 pixels.

You may not be in charge of code for your own particular project, but if you have access to the CSS files, the important part is this:

```
@media screen and (max-width:1000px)
                    {

                    }
```

Basically, this means that anything prior to this line will apply to normal resolutions, and all the declarations inside of this section will apply to screens lower than 1000 pixels. This even works if the user starts with a browser on a large screen, and then resizes his or her browser to be smaller. You can make several

declarations like that, one for large displays, one for tablets and one for smartphones. In the end, as an artist you should be thinking about how your work will be seen by your target audience, not by yourself, so it's important to keep up to date with what people use, and design accordingly.

Interview with Andrew Ryan

Sat, Nov 3 2012 19:50:23 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Andrew Ryan, recent art graduate and gamer, who created cross-over illustrations of Mass Effect and Dragon Age, becoming famous on many sites around the web.

Could you describe yourself and your background?

My name is Andrew Ryan, I'm 25 years old and originally from Jessup, Maryland. I currently reside in the New York City area where I recently graduated from the School of Visual Arts as an illustration major.

What gave you the idea of drawing Mass Effect and Dragon Age cross over characters?

The idea to do Dragon effect was something that just sort of happened by accident one day when I was doing a sketch of Commander Shepard. I suddenly wondered what he'd look like in the blood dragon armor from the Dragon Age games so I finished the sketch and then realized it would be a lot of fun to visualize all of the characters in a large scale crossover project. Plus I really love a lot of the characters from Mass Effect so now that the trilogy is kind of over I wanted an opportunity to further interact with them in a unique and interesting way.

Your art has been featured on several sites including Kotaku, were you surprised by that?

To be honest I was not surprised that it's been featured on Kotaku, in fact one of my goals was to finish the series and then submit it to Kotaku to see if they'd feature it. They'd featured some of my other Mass Effect fan art before so I felt fairly confident that I could do work that would warrant another article, I was

however surprised that even before I finished all of the characters it started getting a lot of exposure and has already been featured on kotaku three seperate times. It was also recently featured on the gaming section of reddit and garnered 200,000+ views in a single day which I was sort of blown away by.

Do you consider yourself a big gamer? Are you a fan of both franchises?

I consider myself a pretty big gamer though I'm very selective about how many games I play. I tend to look for very immersive games that take a long time to complete or offer a lot of re playability. Bethesda and Bioware by far make my favorite games since their titles best fulfill these requirements.

What software tools did you use to make these images and how long did it take you?

My software of choice is photoshop, I've never really used anything else for digital painting. Typically I don't like to spend more than one day on a character concept, the actual process takes about five hours though I'm constantly trying to improve my speed since most industry concept artists can probably do at least three characters in that same amount of time and I eventually want to be at the same level.

What made you decide which character should be paired with which?

As for the pairing of the characters I just sort of decided based on who I thought would compliment one another or for personal reasons, for instance My Shepard romanced Kaidan in Mass Effect so it was only natural that I paired them together in the Dragon Effect crossover and Miranda ended up with Jack because they had such an interestingly combative relationship in Mass Effect 2. Others ended up being a little more random, for instance Kasumi and Zaeed (who I'm working on currently) happened to be some of the last characters I had to complete and though they don't have a real connection in the game I find it fun to come

up with a story as to how/why they're together in my crossover and have that story reflect their general personalities from the Mass Effect games.

You recently graduated from art school, how hard is it to find work or clients?

As a recent art school graduate I can't really say whether or not I'd have a hard time finding work because honestly I haven't really been job hunting. Art school left me feeling a little bitter about my skill level, I felt I didn't learn/progress as much as I should have after four years of education so since graduating in May I've mostly just been painting away day and night trying to improve my skills and feel confident enough to start job hunting. Though I have had some freelance work come my way from companies like paizo (pathfinder) and fantasy flight (Lord of the Rings card game), and I have an upcoming art convention where I'm hoping to showcase my work and possibly meet new clients so hopefully in a year or so I'll have a lot more going on. but for now having the freedom to do my own fan art has been fantastic.

Do you have any advice to offer for current students hoping to get into the same field?

My advice for current students is that while school can be a great learning device it's really up to you whether or not you achieve the necessary level of skill required to make it in this industry. A lot of the assignments given out in art school are not going to be suited for your career path and you have to pick and choose which classes you put the most effort into based on which ones will yield the most improvement in your overall technical ability. Also make sure you know who your instructorsd are going to be, my good friend had an instructor at art school with connections in the gaming industry senior year, and through that contact she is now temping for rockstar games so view your instructors not only as educators whom you can learn from but also as potential networking opportunities.

Any other cross over projects on the horizon?

As far as other crossover projects I have nothing planned at the moment but Dragon Effect has been great fun so I'm sure I'll be brainstorming other ideas in the foreseeable future.

Fans cautiously optimistic about Lucasfilm acquisition

Sat, Nov 3 2012 1:27:57 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

With news of Lucasfilm being bought by Disney, questions started to appear across the web from people wondering what this would mean for the work that's been created surrounding the franchise from artists who are fans of this series. So far, it seems most people are *cautiously optimistic* that this will be a positive change, but some are concerned about the corporate overtone.

Star Wars is one of those rare franchise that has stood the test of time. It's been around for a long time, and the fan base is huge. The amount of content created by those fans is also very big. Many artists of all disciplines have made fan art, and a lot of the lore now accepted as an integral part of the Star Wars universe comes from those third party sources. But now, with the acquisition, who knows if the liberal stance vis-a-vis fan art will remain. Disney is well known for being very aggressive versus those that the company considers breaching its business interests.

MTV has an interview with Eric Geller from TheForce.net where he talks about the main concern from fans. *''Lucasfilm has been pretty good about reaching out to fans for things like screenings of episodes of 'The Clone Wars,' and we don't want to see that relationship with the fans disappear, We want Disney to continue Lucasfilm's outreach to fans because we want to continue to feel connected to the saga.''*

Review of DSON Importer for Poser

Sat, Nov 3 2012 0:19:45 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Poser users and DAZ 3D have been at odds in the past year, thanks to the introduction of the Genesis figure, which wasn't compatible with the Poser software. This was a frustrating development for many in the 3D art community. But last month, DAZ 3D introduced a brand new tool called the DSON Importer, which the company says will solve all these problems, some even calling it *Poser heaven*. But is it?

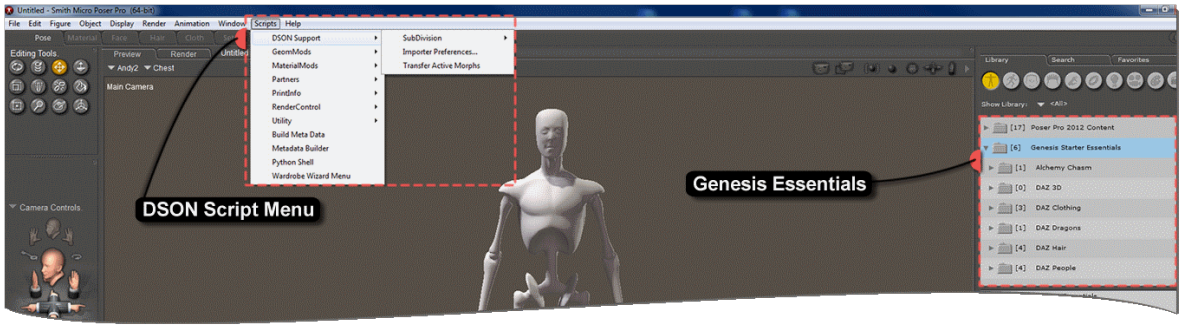
Poser is a popular tool used by 3D artists all over the world who want to create renders using all kinds of pre-existing models. It's used to pose, texture, gear up and animate virtual characters, those characters often coming from several other sources. Traditionally, many Poser users have used DAZ 3D models, more specifically Victory 4 and Michael 4. Last year, DAZ decided to use a new technology that they had developed based around weight-mapped figures, and introduced Genesis, a brand new figure which, unlike previous models, could be shaped in vastly superior ways, in order to be morphed into a male, female, animal or even an alien creature.

The problem is that Genesis only worked in their own software, DAZ Studio. So for the first time in a long history of cooperation between Poser and DAZ, they broke compatibility. Some ways could still be used to bridge the gap, such as posing the model in DAZ Studio, then saving it and importing it in Poser using an exporter tool, but the result was mixed. A lot of Poser users were angry about this development, especially since Smith Micro introduced very similar weight-mapping technologies in their own Poser Pro 2012 release. But both technologies were incompatible.

So now, early last month, DAZ 3D announced the release of DSON Importer, and to this day this tool is still featured prominently on their front page, showing how big the demand must have been for the Genesis figure to work in Poser. First, let's see what this does. According to the store description, the DAZ Scene Object Notation (DSON) Importer enables the loading and use of models and figures created for the Genesis platform in Poser. So with this $24.99 purchase, Poser users are now able to use Genesis figures and clothes in Poser.

To start with, there are a few catches. First, you need Poser 9 or Poser Pro 2012 with SR3 or higher in order for this to work. On the Genesis side, you need content that has been converted to the DSON format. Right now, only part of what DAZ offers is compatible with the DSON Importer, although more has been appearing in the store this past month. DAZ Studio isn't needed to use this, but if you do use this software, you can convert your own content to be DSON compatible from within the user interface.

So how well does this work? Well, for one thing, the whole process is a lot easier than what it used to take to get Genesis to work in Poser. DSON Importer comes in an installer, so it's a matter of just a few clicks. There's a second package called Genesis Essentials that you also need to install. However, you may find out that not everything works as it would in DAZ Studio. For example, while it supports SubD and morph transfer, it does not deal with smoothing or collision detection. The interface itself is fairly simple, and well integrated into Poser. DAZ published a step by step guide showing you how to import Genesis, clothes, and then make everything fit. Basically, DSON enabled figures have some extra morphs that you can use, and the Importer adds an extra entry in the Scripts menu for utilities you will need.



At first glance, it seems to load Genesis itself and the base figures just fine. Everything in the Essentials pack loads and adapts well to the Poser environment. One thing that often happens however is that colors and shaders will not look the way they should. If you buy some clothing item for Genesis from DAZ 3D, and then load it in Poser, the materials may not have been optimized for Poser, but only DAZ Studio. As a result, you may find yourself doing more work in the Textures room than before.

That isn't to say you shouldn't bother with Genesis at all if you're a Poser user. For one, weight-mapped figures bend in a much better way than previous generations. Also, with SubD, you can get Genesis to have a much higher polygon count if you need it. For those a bit more advanced who are looking at modifying content, or creating their own content for Genesis without using DAZ Studio, the DSF Toolbox tool sold at DAZ 3D allows you to deal with the new file formats without having to install DAZ Studio. With it you can extract OBJ files, and map new UVs and textures.

When it comes to customizing, the basic Genesis figure allows you to modify its form greatly, such as morphing it into a child or even a werewolf. But when it comes to finer adjustments, you may find that your Victoria 4 or Michael 4 characters, especially with the Morphs++ modules, offer a greater range of changes. This is due in part to the limits imposed on the dials you get from DSON compatible content, and hidden dials. V4 and M4 textures and clothing should also work on Genesis without too much trouble, so even if you have older content, you can keep using it with this new figure.

Overall, DSON Importer is a great tool for Poser users, because it's clear DAZ 3D is focusing completely on Genesis, and has all but abandoned the older generations. This tool doesn't do everything that DAZ Studio allows you to do with Genesis, it's simply not a full compatibility, but for many people it will be good enough.

Hurricane Sandy devastates New York art district

Fri, Nov 2 2012 23:23:15 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

With the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, a lot of people came home to New York City and found flooded basements and devastated buildings. But in the Chelsea district on the West Side of Manhattan, where a lot of art communities reside, they too found some of the biggest devastation in a long time, according to a report from AP.

We talked about one particular studio who suffered major damages, but it seems this may end up being the case for several more places. According to one executive at the Fine Art Conservation Group, *''We've never seen an event like this in the neighborhood. It is surreal, honestly, to see this much damage all at the same time and so widespread.''*

There are more than a hundred art galleries in this district alone, and many more studios working on all kinds of art projects. Rachel Churner, owner of Churner Gallery, echoed the same sentiments, saying *''Everyone prepared the best they could, but the damage was much worse than anticipated.''*

While the total amount lost won't be known for quite some time yet, it's clear that the New York art community suffered greatly from this event.

Dredd 3D depth perception video

Fri, Nov 2 2012 19:32:35 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The VFX supervisor behind Dredd 3D talks about pre-viz and how to give a sense of scale in CGI scenes. Note that some spoilers may be contained in the video.

Artist showcase: Curious3d

Fri, Nov 2 2012 5:51:36 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature the art of Cynthia, also known as Curious3d.

2012

Unity 4 Beta available

Thu, Nov 1 2012 21:36:13 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under news

This morning, Unity Technologies announced the availability of their Unity 4 Beta release. The new version is also available for free to everyone, which is a change from previous releases.

Unity is a very popular engine for making 3D games, and version 4 includes a lot of new features like Mecanim, Flash, Linux, DirectX 11, shadows on mobile, editor improvements, new Image Effects and a many other improvements. The company warns that some bugs will be present, but if you want to help test the beta, you can proceed to the download page.

George Lucas talks about the future of Lucasfilm and Star Wars

Thu, Nov 1 2012 21:07:11 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Following the announcement earlier this week on Disney buying out Lucasfilm, George Lucas himself talks in this video about what his plans are for Star Wars, and why he took these decisions.

ZBrush Halloween Challenge finalists

Thu, Nov 1 2012 19:58:44 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Pixologic, makers of the popular ZBrush 3D app, ran a Halloween Challenge over the past month, where any artist could submit a render of something they constructed using the software. Now that Halloween has come and gone, the finalists are shown on their site for all to see.

The company thanked all of those who submitted an entry in their blog post. Over 70 entries were picked and displayed this year.

Hurricane Sandy leaves Greenpoint Studios wrecked

Thu, Nov 1 2012 19:51:30 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

In the aftermaths of Hurricane Sandy, it seems like some artists returned to Brooklyn and found their studio building devastated. Greenpoint Studios is on Commercial Street and suffered some of the worse flooding in New York, leaving years of work destroyed and very little salvageable.

Artinfo visited the studios and took pictures of the flood damage on the scene. Simply watching these images it's hard to imagine much will be salvageable, and the work on reconstructing the studio may take a while. A lot of the works included traditional paintings, including a gallery and show room, which have been wiped out.

There's no report yet of other studios suffering a similar fate, but this one establishment has served artists in New York for decades, and will be a big blow to the city.

Camera shake video tutorial

Thu, Nov 1 2012 4:05:37 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Bammo, the people behind several YouTube shorts like Sync, posted a quick video tutorial on how to simulate camera shakes in Adobe After Effects.

We Are Blur video

Thu, Nov 1 2012 1:36:51 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

To help fuel their recent Kickstarter campaign, Blur, the company behind so many cinematics and animations, decided to post a behind the scenes video, showing their offices and the artists at work.

Mass Effect art contest

Wed, Oct 31 2012 21:24:42 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under news

Fans of Mass Effect have always created great art to express their love of the franchise, but now if you like the games and can draw, compose music or some other type of art, you could win prizes, thanks to Screw Attack's latest challenge.

Shepards of Art 2 is the site's second contest to be run about the Mass Effect universe, and they are calling all artists to submit their entries by November 14th. Writing, pictures, videos, music, any type of art will be accepted as long as it deals with Mass Effect and Shepard in particular. The winners will be featured on Screw Attack and win free stuff.

Hitman short behind the scenes video

Wed, Oct 31 2012 10:00:09 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Fans of VFX will know Freddie Wong on YouTube, and this week he has another behind the scenes video showing how they made a Hitman short.

Citadel behind the scenes video

Wed, Oct 31 2012 9:41:05 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under videos

Ciaran Foy, the director behind the indie movie **The Citadel**, talks about what it takes to film something like that, and everything that's involved during production.

Interview with Meet Me Far

Wed, Oct 31 2012 7:31:27 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Ran Sieradzki animation director for Meet Me Far, a music video created in 3D.

Could you describe yourself and your background?

I was born and raised in Israel and have been sketching since I was one year old. Just like 90% of the animators, I started doodling in my school books and created flipbooks out of them. After graduating High school and serving in the Israeli military, I attended college to study Illustration and design. During my third year, I realized the College did not offer Animation studies as promised, I then started learning Maya on my own. My final project was a three minute long short film, all done in Maya, which was the first Animated project the college had seen and therefore under their critique. Since I knew that my goal was Animation I applied to Sheridan college in Ontario Canada, got accepted and attended Digital character animation studies. Finally. Being an international student and my visa having an expiration date, I had to move back to Israel. I started working at local studios, moving up and becoming Lead animator and later, a freelance Animation Director. During that time I also tutored aspiring animators. Then, I got my Permanent Resident Visa and moved to Canada for good. Started working at Gallus as Lead Multivision department. A personal tragedy brought me back to Israel for three months and then I came back to Canada. Now I am a teacher at Seneca College and working at Trixter|Canada.

How did you get to work on Meet Me Far?

'Meet me far' started as a whole different project. Apart from my regular work, meeting up with client demands I had my own vision. I initiated a call to a local well known singer and offered my skills for a music video for one of his songs. After his agreement I gathered a group of colleagues and we began developing the video. Since we did not get paid, some of them bailed but the ones that remained persevered and the video was completed. The video completion took over two years and along the way the singer disappeared from the horizon. So we had a video but no home for it. After several failed attempts to find good home for the video I was approached by one of the most talented music producers/composers named - Tomer Biran. Tomer said he had the perfect song for my video, I agreed to check it out and to see how we can modify and tweak so it would fit. No tweaking nor modification were needed, the Video fit to the song like a silk glove. I understood that was meant to be.

The animation clearly tells a story, could you describe what you wanted to express in the video?

In a word, loneliness. The lonely character, sitting on a floating island gets his fantasy triggered by a falling

feather. His fantasy starts naive and nice but shortly gets too much and the character wants out. Just like in real life, things might get out of hand or unplanned and we find our security in what is familiar to us. Our safe spot. Our love.

Who else is behind the work that went into this music video?

The magnificent people that worked on the video were:
* Story - Eyal Shirazi, Ran Sieradzki, Asaf Yeger
* Director - Ran Sieradzki
* Compositing - Eyal Shirazi
* Lighting/Shading - Eran Ashraf, Rami Stainer, Avi Ben-Avraham
* Rendering - Eran Ashraf, Avi Ben-Avraham
* Modeling/Rigging - Moshe Bitan, Ran Sieradzki, Mark Serdtse
* Animation - Ran Sieradzki
* Art - Talya Fewkes, Alex Kizin, Ran Sieradzki
* Music - Tomer Biran
* Vocals - Anat Ben Hemo
* Lyrics - Yael Heim

And of course, Israel Assif, for changing my life.

How much time and efforts did it take to make the animation?

The actual animation process took about seven months in the making, using planning of shots in 2D and 'converting' them to 3D animation. The whole video was done on free time and weekends.

Which software and hardware tools did you use to create it?

Normal home PC's and Mac's were used as Hardware, not too shabby when it comes to highend machines. The software we used was: Adobe Photoshop, Autodesk Maya, Adobe After Effects, The foundry NUKE.

How did the collaboration go with Anat?

The collaboration was all done online through Tomer, Anat watched the video on top of her song and shed a tear (Anat, Tomer said so...). Just the other day Anat wrote to me: ''...Such an amazing and working collaboration and we have not even met yet! We have to do more things together...''

What kind of feedback did you get so far?

The video is on the air for the past five days, it got several thousand views and the reviews are all very positive and encouraging. Here is an example of such reviews: ''Beautiful combination of divine soft comforting voice, deep words and lovely animation. I played it once and again and again and again Let's hope for more of such nice clips''

Do you have any other project in the works?

Well, it is too early to discuss but I have few other irons in the fire

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Disney buys Lucasfilm, new Star Wars movie in 2015

Tue, Oct 30 2012 20:03:11 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Some big news hit today through a press release from the Walt Disney Company, announcing that they would acquire Lucasfilm Ltd, including the legendary Star Wars franchise. Also, the release says that a new Star Wars movie, Episode 7, is targeted for release in 2015.

The Walt Disney Company has agreed to acquire Lucasfilm Ltd. in a stock and cash transaction. Lucasfilm is currently owned by Lucasfilm Chairman and Founder, George Lucas. Under the agreement, the buying price comes up to around $4.05 billion, with half being paid in cash and the remainder in stocks. Lucasfilm will now join other Disney properties like ESPN, Pixar, Marvel and ABC.

The Star Wars franchise is also part of the deal. Kathleen Kennedy, current Co-Chairman of Lucasfilm, will become President of Lucasfilm, and will act as executive producer for the next Star Wars movie, Episode 7. More feature films are also planned to grow the franchise well into the future, as announced in the investors call, with Episodes 8 and 9 already planned, and a new film every 2 to 3 years.

The Boards of Directors of Disney and Lucasfilm have approved the transaction, which is still subject to approval by regulators.

Autodesk Flame 20th anniversary edition

Tue, Oct 30 2012 18:49:19 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

In a short announcement, Autodesk today released a series of new software versions for its subscribers. These include Autodesk Flame Premium 2013 20th Anniversary Edition, Autodesk Flame 2013 20th Anniversary Edition, Autodesk Flare, Smoke Advanced, Smoke (Linux), Inferno, Flint and Backdraft Conform 2013 Extension 1.

Earlier this year, the company had announced that to celebrate 20 years of Flame, they would release these special editions. Flame products are popular tools for visual effects, advanced graphics, and 3D compositing in television and film post production. Some of the new features in this anniversary edition include:

* New Creative Workspace
* Faster Access to Creative Toolsets
* Redesigned Timeline Workflow
* Enhanced Flame Desktop Reels
* Faster Compositing and 3D VFX Development in Batch and Action
* Unified Approach to Media Management
* Faster Conforming
* Modern Color Management
* Format Support
* Tangent Element: Color Grading Control at Your Fingertips

Subscribers will receive emails with download details, while others can check out the community site for more information.

Demolition Master 1.4 features video

Tue, Oct 30 2012 18:26:12 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The team behind Demolition Master, a plugin for 3DS MAX, released a video showing off some of the new features in release 1.4.

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5 iPad art apps for kids

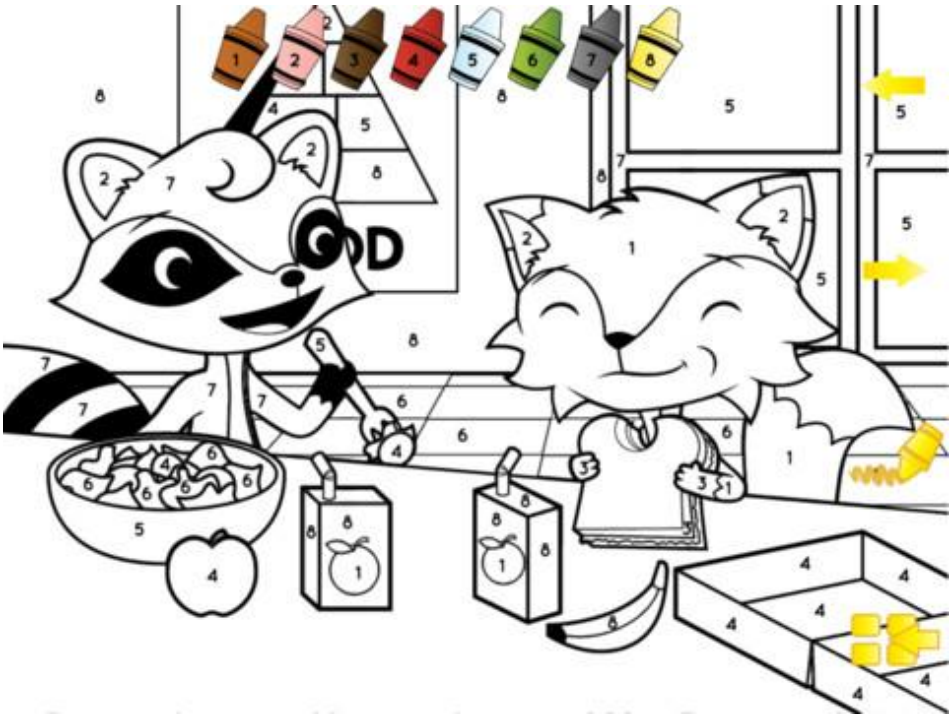
Tue, Oct 30 2012 18:13:43 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

The iPad, along with other tablets, are great tools for artists, because you get to use the interface with your fingers, which often ends up being a much more natural way of dealing with an app. We've already seen some professional grade products like Photoshop Touch, but the iPad is also a great device for kids to learn the world of art. Here are 5 great apps you may want to check out with your kids.

SketchMoo 2

The app SketchMoo 2 is a very simple and inexpensive app which provides the basic features that a young kid would want, which is the ability to draw anything they want on the screen, along with a large button to erase everything and start over. This app is mainly aimed at young kids as a first stepping stone, without any advanced feature.

Connect N Color HD



Connect N Color HD is the iPad version of an iPhone app which focuses on learning. Kids get to connect lines together on a drawing, and learn numbers at the same time. Again, this is best for young kids just starting off, and could easily be their first contact with the iPad.

Bloom HD

With Bloom HD, kids can mix both visual art along with music. Instead of drawing shapes, this app allows you to use the touchscreen to make patterns and melodies. A generative music player takes over when Bloom is left idle, creating an infinite selection of compositions and their accompanying visualizations.

Drawing Pad

Drawing Pad is a painting app for kids who really want to go wild without restrictions. This app provides a

number of easy to use controls, including a pen, paintbrush, eraser, blender and brush tools. Kids of all ages will probably find something interesting to draw with this app.

Let's Create! Pottery HD

Not all apps have to be about drawing either, as shown by Let's Create! Pottery HD, an app that allows you to make clay items, texture them, and share them. This app is a bit more advanced and would be best for slightly older kids, but is a great way to introduce different types of art to children.

Blender VFX breakdown video

Tue, Oct 30 2012 17:37:28 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

This video released last week shows an interesting breakdown of how a sci-fi trailer was made using Blender 3D.

Halloween 2012 showcase

Tue, Oct 30 2012 7:25:09 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Halloween is here once again, and 2012 brings a lot of wonderful art from artists all around the world. Here are a few samples of works created this year.

Created by: Roland

Created by: Tororo

Created by: Shane B.

Created by: Brandy Thomas

Created by: Moro

Created by: Gabriel Garcia

Created by: Brittany Lewis-Hibbert

Created by: Perikanbin

Created by: Raemz

Created by: Anna Marine

Created by: Enamorte

Created by: Karin Claesson

Created by: Ragora57

Created by: CuteReaper

Created by: Paul

Created by: Ruki Fox

Created by: tinca2

V-Ray at Siggraph Asia 2012

Tue, Oct 30 2012 7:01:10 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Chaos Group, the makers of V-Ray, one of the most popular 3D renderer out there, announced details of their Siggraph Asia 2012 presence, along with the software they will show off at booth C12, for those who will attend the yearly conference.

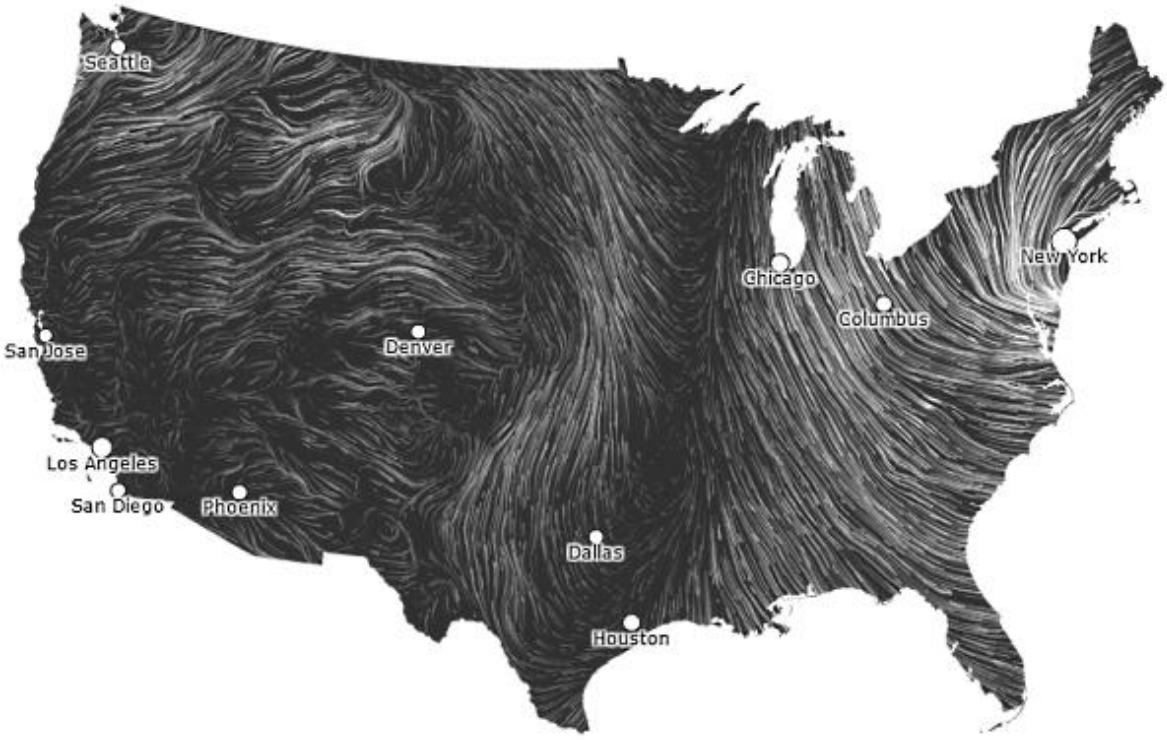
Some of the software featured at the conference will include the latest additions to V-Ray for 3DS MAX and V-Ray for Maya, along with Phoenix FD for 3DS MAX. You will also see in action their latest product addition, Phoenix FD for Maya, along with a sneak peak preview of what is coming in V-Ray 3.0.

Lightfeel and Drawiz, two well known community members, will share their experience with V-Ray and uncover the secrets of making photo realistic architectural visualization and CG creatures in their presentation on the show floor.

Wind map art project showing hurricane winds

Mon, Oct 29 2012 21:48:25 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

While most people on the east coast are bracing themselves for Hurricane Sandy, a group of designers created the Wind Map, what they describe as a personal art project that shows the speed of the wind across the US.



According to Fernanda Viégas and Martin Wattenberg, collaborators on the site, they invent new ways for people to think and talk about data. The map takes data from the National Digital Forecast Database and creates a very interesting looking animation. They started the project earlier this year, but now with the storm coming over the east coast, their animation comes to life with those very fast winds brushing over the eastern part of the US.

The team makes it clear that they are not associated with any company, and want you to get more familiar with wind and wind power. They also made available wind map prints.

Odyssey II community book

Mon, Oct 29 2012 20:02:29 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Odyssey II with Clive Barker is the second installment of a community project, run on DeviantART, where authors and artists can all contribute pieces of literature and artwork towards a complete book. Started earlier this month, Odyssey II is well under way with the prologue completed, and Chapter 1 and 2 submissions ending this week.

The first Odyssey project from last year proved to be a popular concept, and now renowned author and film director Clive Barker is running the second round, creating another community book project called Odyssey II. Any user of DeviantART can submit text or art to be included in the finished product, with deadlines being set every week. The completed book will be published both as a multimedia experience and a hard cover in 2013.

Making of a pumpkin in Cinema4D

Mon, Oct 29 2012 17:32:58 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this two-part video, Nick Campbell shows us how to create a 3D pumpkin from scratch in Cinema4D. The first part covers modeling, while part 2 covers lighting and texturing.

Dredd 3D - The Foundations of Mega-City One

Mon, Oct 29 2012 8:19:46 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The VFX team behind Dredd 3D, the science fiction action film directed by Pete Travis, posted a video in which they describe the creation of the large mega city used in the movie, along with how they came up with the concept.

Andrew Gordon gives tips on how to work for Pixar

Mon, Oct 29 2012 0:11:41 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Andrew Gordon from Pixar posted a series of tips and tricks for those interested in getting a job at Pixar, and generic advices on how to get into the industry.

Some of the tips he gave include:
* Definitely don't have blinders on of ''I just want to work at Pixar''
* When picking internships, look at people and places and think ''How can I learn?''
* There's not one specific reel that's going to bag you a place
* Build a really strong foundation of traditional art
* Once you get complacent, that's the danger. You've got to always be pushing
* I think any art-based job is more about your portfolio and less about credentials
* We're looking for people that have a quality or a sensibility of either animation or design

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Artist showcase: Destrega

Sun, Oct 28 2012 14:39:40 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature the art of Erasmus Brosdau, also known as Destrega, a 3D artist from Germany.

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audio
audio
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Erasmus Brossau 2007

THE DEAD PIANO | (c)2007 Erasmus Broadbur

How to know if a freelance opportunity is no good

Sat, Oct 27 2012 22:00:37 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

A lot of artists work as freelancers, meaning we aren't employed in a 9 to 5 job, instead we look for contracts online and through in-person meetings, and often do short term sessions, working perhaps a week or a month on a specific project, then moving on. This is particularly the case in the VFX industry, and even many concept artists, painters and animators end up doing this type of work. But this in turn means you need to go through a lot of job postings, offering you all kinds of opportunities. If you aren't an industry veteran, you may not know what constitute a good project for you to get in. Here are some signs that may indicate you should be suspicious of a freelance opportunity.

The first thing to look at is the pay. With globalization, we've seen a lot of people expecting work to be done for a lower budget. In some cases, that's realistic, since the price of computers, software and tools have gone down, but at the end of the day you should get the type of income that you think you're worth. This can be a problem when dealing over the Internet, especially for remote contracts, where you don't need to be on site.

For example, a typical 3D modeler in the US may charge around $800 to make a custom model, then UV map it and rig it. This would be a job that takes a couple of days at the most. However, as countries like India and China become more tech savvy, modelers over there may offer to do the same thing for just $100. That's a huge cost saving, and may mean you don't get that job. The quality may be lower, obviously, but not all clients realize that, or even care. So the question often becomes whether or not you're willing to lower your rate, sometimes significantly, just to get work. If you're just out of college, then it may be worth it just for the work experience. Otherwise, then you may want to pass on that opportunity.

While low pay is an obvious red flag, there are other signs to look for as well. A lot of postings you find online will offer other types of remuneration, such as equity in the company, a percentage of profits, or my favorite of all, 'exposure'. All of these should be avoided, unless you really need the experience. No serious client offers these types of incentives. Even when you get paid, you get your exposure, so that's not a valid remuneration. This is just a cheap way to say that they are not willing to pay for your work. This may be fine with you, especially if it's an amateur project, but more often than not you may be better off looking elsewhere.

An interesting requirement you may see in some work offers is to have your own work equipment. The post may say something like *'You must have your own software and hardware'*, then list exactly which applications they want you to have. Unless the posting is for an off-site job, where you work from your own home, this is also a red flag because it means they most likely aren't a professional outfit, it's most likely a one time deal, so the chance that you will get paid may be lower. The same is true if they talk about overtime in the ad. If they mention that word, chances are that they mean they expect you to do unpaid overtime, so make sure you clarify exactly the amount of time they expect you to work on this.

One sneaky way some companies use to get work for free is to ask for unique samples. This is especially true with writers, but has also been seen in other art fields. If a work offer asks you to send a brand new, unique sample, and then describes exactly what the sample should be, then that's no longer a sample, it's asking you to do free work. Some sites also use contests, where the prize of this contest is the privilege of having your work used by them, for commercial gains. Again, if you have some free time, and you believe that the exposure it will bring you is worth that time, then go ahead. Otherwise, that company should be fine with past samples you can provide them.

Vagueness in a job opportunity is also something that should concern you. Often, clients have no concept of the amount of work that will really be needed to do the job they want done. Asking a VFX artist to do 15 to 20 shots in a day is, in most cases, a large amount of work. But someone who only thinks about the shots, each being just a few minutes long, may not realize that. Make sure you know exactly what you're getting into.

Finally, make sure to get everything in writing, or at least by email, so that there is no confusion as to what the job is, how much time you should be spending on it, and what your remuneration will be. If a client refuses to write exact terms down, and instead insists on telling you through Skype or IM, then walk away. At the end of the day, almost every freelancer will get some bad deals at some point in their career, either a client that doesn't pay, or a project that ends up being much more difficult than initially expected. But by following strict guidelines, you can make sure to minimize the risk.

Shade 3D for Unity announced

Sat, Oct 27 2012 18:50:19 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

This week, E-Frontier announced the release of Shade 3D for Unity, coming this November. The new tool will be available for free through the Mac AppStore, and integrate tightly into the Unity development workflow.

Shade has been around for decades as a 3D modeling application, and its professional version is used by 3D artists, game designers and indie developers around the world. Now, the company says that Shade 3D for Unity will enable new users to build animated project content that integrates with Unity 3D, the game development system for Windows, Mac OS X, iOS, and Android with the high level of compatibility between Shade 3D for Unity and Unity itself.

Some of the features available will include:

* Import/Export integration with Unity 3D
* Advanced 3D Modeling Environment
* Polygon Mesh Editor
* UV Editor and Image Management

* Design friendly Bezier Spline Modeler
* Powerful Object Instancing Features
* 3D Object Hierarchy Browser
* Material Setting Features
* Material Parameter with Texture Map Settings
* Animation Setting Feature
* Draft Ray Tracing Renderer
* FBX-friendly Bone Structure
* Paintable Bone Weight Mapping Tool
* FBX compatible Inverse Kinematics Feature
* Scene Loader for Unity (imports .shd files; available through Unity Asset Store)
* Simple Spring Motion Simulator(Baked Simulation result exportable to Unity)
* Key Frame Animation(Baked Key Frame for Unity is output in addition to Key Frame for Shade)

VFX breakdowns on The Borgias

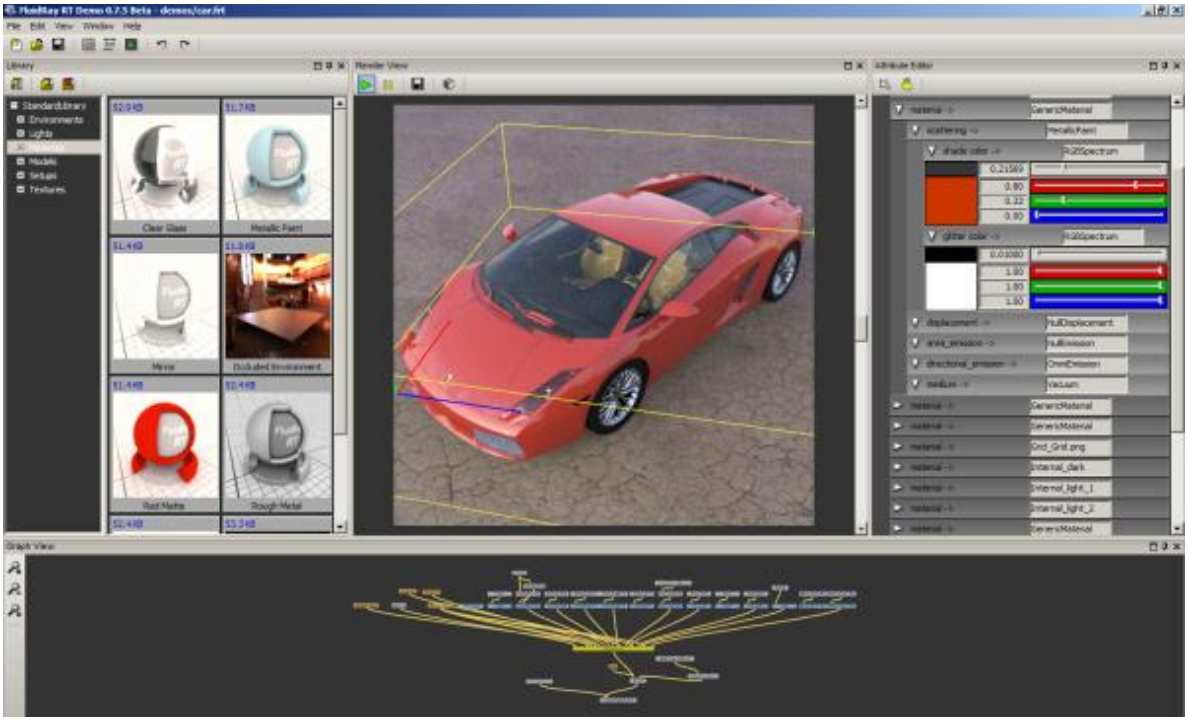
Sat, Oct 27 2012 9:50:22 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video, the firm behind the visual effects in the popular TV series The Borgias shows us some of the work that went in, including some green screen footage and other special effects.

Interview with FluidRay

Sat, Oct 27 2012 9:05:37 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Nicola Candussi from FluidInteractive, the makers of FluidRay, a real-time rendering and easy global illumination solution for 3D artists.



Could you describe yourself and your background?

I'm Nicola Candussi, I'm one of the founders of FluidInteractive, a software house focused on computer graphics, 3d rendering, and numerical simulation. Personally I have more than 20 years experience in the field of Computer Graphics and C++ software development. My last position as employee, before going on my own, was as Senior Software Engineer at Disney Animation in Los Angeles.

What is FluidRay and what are some of its features?

FluidRay RT is a real-time global illumination renderer. It is based on algorithms that accurately simulate light in a physically correct way. No shortcuts. All material models included are physically correct as well, and the simulation is performed on a per-wavelength basis (FluidRay RT spectral rendering). This means that effects like caustics and dispersion are rendered accurately. The final images are extremely realistic.

All of this is done in real-time, you can tweak materials, add bump mapping, change reflection models, adjust lights and you get an immediate feedback in the WYSIWYG interface. No waiting times or trial and error.

What are the goals behind making this project, and how long have you been developing it?

We wanted to make a renderer that is easy to learn and use, and that increases the productivity, but at the same time with all the features provided by the most modern rendering engines. For those reasons with went for a real-time renderer that is CPU based, avoiding all the problems of GPU based render engines (memory limited, hard to program and hard to add features). FluidRay RT is able to render scenes that use all your system RAM.

Up until now, we are 2 years in development.

Most renderers are made by large companies like Autodesk, how do you feel competing against them?

There are actually a bunch of successful renderers made by small companies as well Many times being a small company allows to be more dynamic and listen more on what users have to say and what they really need.

You recently released a new version of the beta, what are some of the changes and new features?

The last beta has a bunch of new features, among them:
* Procedural Textures
* Instancer nodes (allowing to automatically instance thousands of objects in the scene, such as, for example, trees and grass).

Can you describe what happens behind the scenes allowing it to render in real time?

FluidRay RT uses Intel Embree (released under the Apache 2.0 license) as intersection kernel. Together with a bunch of other proprietary algorithms, we are able to provide real-time, full-spectral global illumination in a WYSIWYG interface.

Do you plan to expand the application to be more than a renderer, perhaps with modeling options?

We are working on adding animation as well, but there is no plan to expand it to a modeling application, at least not in the near future.

How has the feedback been so far?

The feedback has been great! It really helps us going forward and improving the product day by day.

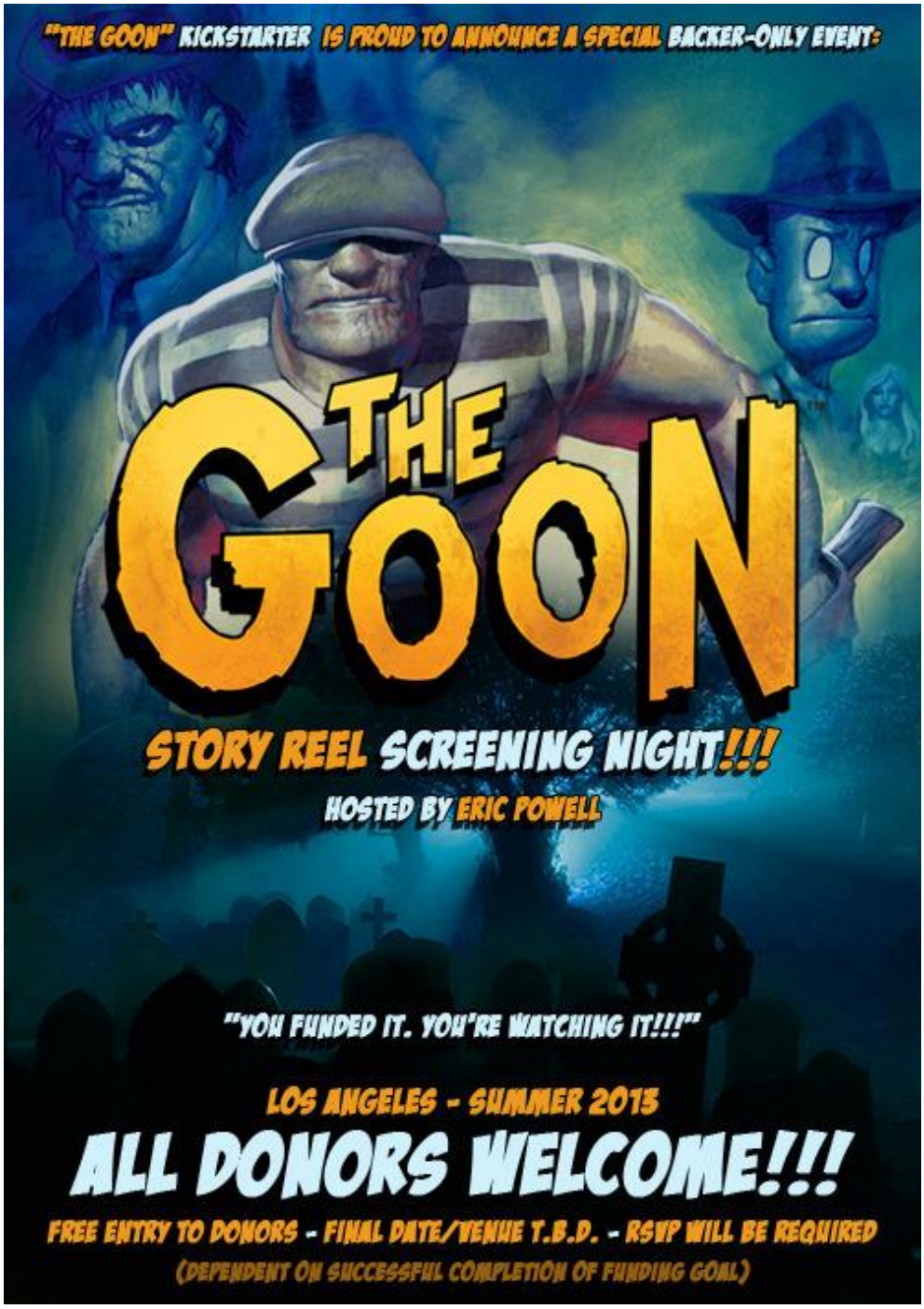
When do you think the final version will be released?

We don't have a schedule for the final release yet, but it's not far ahead!

The Goon controversy

Fri, Oct 26 2012 21:29:33 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Two weeks ago, Blur, the studio behind the movie project The Goon, started a Kickstarter campaign in order to complete a story reel for the film, based on the comic of the same name. Then, a little controversy started with a post on Cartoon Brew about the Kickstarter campaign, and today the studio addresses part of the perceived problem in an update posted on the Kickstarter site.



It all started with an idea, to adapt the comic The Goon into a short animated film. Blur, the studio behind the project, tried to get some corporate backing but fell short. Instead, they turned to Kickstarter in order to get fans to donate $400,000. The problem, according to some people, is that the money is being raised in order to make a story reel, not the movie itself. Also, this story reel won't actually be seen by most people, only backers who provide a large amount of money. In effect, the product behind the campaign won't be available for most people who put money in.

The team at Blur Studio responded to this criticism, initially by email with Cartoon Brew, but today they added an additional incentive for backers. In their post on Kickstarter, they announced that a one-time screening night of the story reel will be hosted in Los Angeles. This means that anyone who puts money in, even as low as $1, will get to see the completed project. That is, if they live close to LA.

Top 10 reasons to become an artist

Fri, Oct 26 2012 20:49:42 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

There are a lot of reasons to become an artist, and others why it may not be the career for you. Of course,

everyone has their own reasons why they do something, and for many, art is a way to express themselves, or be able to show their creative sides. It could be a way to pay the bill, or even impress friends. But let's look at more down to Earth reasons, things that may or may not apply to you.

10 - It's a great reason to get drunk

Let's face it, being an artist isn't a great way to get rich, certainly not like being a doctor or lawyer. In fact, an art career is often seen as the one job where people go without food or a place to stay just to finance their creations. But, on the plus side, you get a lot of time to throw a party and get drunk!

9 - Get interesting dates

If you want to impress a girl or guy you met, telling them you're a CEO or important associate in a law firm is sure to raise eyebrows. But having the ability to tell someone you can draw their portrait on a large canvas is something else entirely, and is sure to get you some interesting dates.

8 - You get to sleep in

Many artists are freelancers, meaning they don't work in a typical 9 to 5 job. Instead, you get to sleep in late, to have the schedule you want, and to work as much or as little as you want. Of course, if you want to pay the bills, those contracts still have to be fulfilled, but if you really don't feel like turning the computer on one morning, then you don't have to.

7 - You can have an opinion on everything

Face it, everyone has their own opinion, but typically others aren't really interested in finding out what you think. That is, unless you're an artist. By being a creative person yourself, it automatically gives you the right to express your opinion on pretty much anything else, and people will listen!

6 - You get to dress and look the way you want

You wouldn't want to see your lawyer come into the court room wearing shorts, and open shirt, or a long beard. But if you go to art school, that's almost mandatory! You can look the way you want, and dress the way you want, and everyone thinks it's normal, because you're an artist.

5 - All your childhood toys are okay to keep around

Most people get to see their parents throw away their toys at some point, usually by the time you hit 18 if that hasn't been done before. But if you're an artist, then keeping that comics collection on the shelf, or bobble-heads of your favorite game characters, is a normal thing to do. It's all for inspiration!

4 - You get to draw naked pictures

Let's face it, naked pictures, drawn or otherwise, are still taboo in western society. But if you're an artist, what many would label as porn suddenly becomes anatomy experiments! Drawing a naked body is actually a great way to learn proper anatomy, and that's something you can take to the exam.

3 - Everyone asks for recommendations

Even if you make 3D models, because you're an artist, suddenly everyone starts asking you for recommendations in music, films, and so on. You're the creative person among your friends, and that gives you a new found authority on everything entertainment related.

2 - Live a stress free life

Because you can work on your own schedule, dress and look the way you want, and let's face it, art school is easy, you will probably live a long, stress free life. Of course, the financial problems may come haunt you at some point, but why worry about that now?

1 - Your main work tool is your imagination

The great thing about being an artist is that the main tool you use for work is your own imagination. Everything becomes a possibility, and your creative expression is the only boundary you have. Of course, you can't go wild on every contract you get, and usually have guidelines to respect, but for the most part, this is the one career where you get to use all your mental creativity every single day.

Resident Evil 4 VFX breakdowns

Fri, Oct 26 2012 8:35:52 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Rodeo FX, the Montreal team behind some of the special effects used in the recent movie Resident Evil 4: Afterlife, has posted a video showing us some of the breakdowns used for VFX work in the film.

DeviantART literature updates

Fri, Oct 26 2012 2:44:18 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

DeviantART is well known by artists, and a place many of us use to display pictures, drawings and renders. DA has always had a literature section too, but some found it lacking. Today, the site announced several changes to its literature features and to Sta.sh Writer.

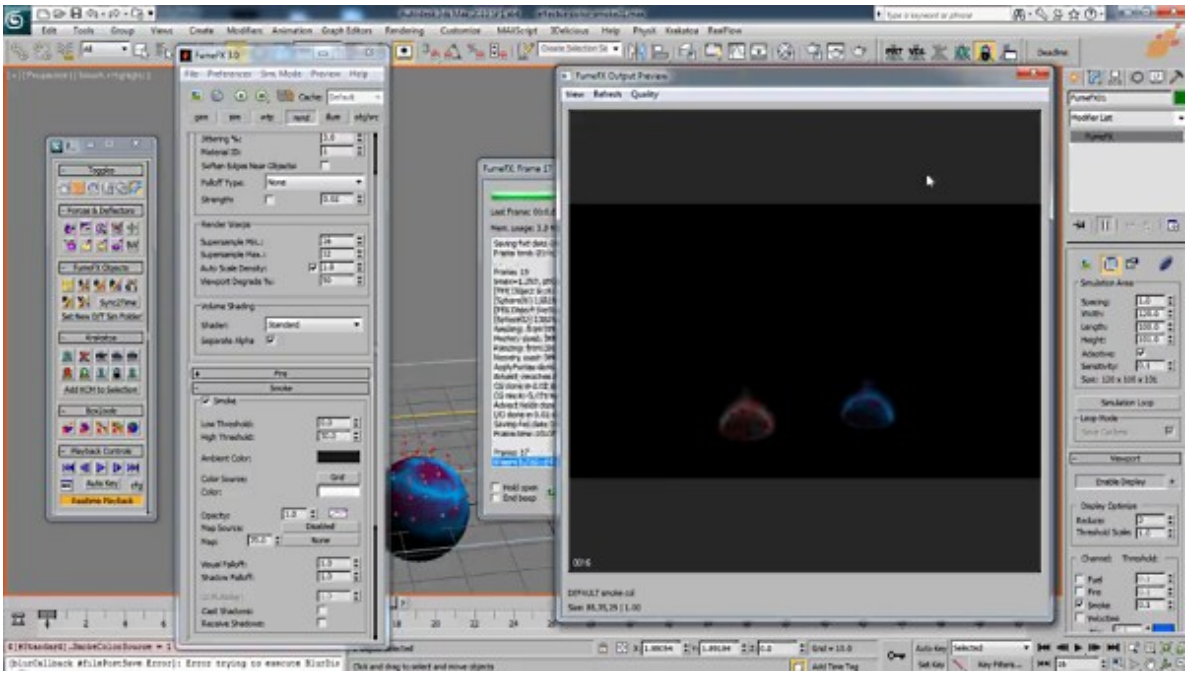
The first change is to how literature and journal entries are displayed, including a better font system, a new layout with familiar options, like the ability to change the background from light to dark, enlarge the text, and more. Sta.sh Writer, their web based HTML5 app, has added emoticons now, along with easily accessible drafts. Group journal entries now also have a *Edit with Sta.sh Writer* button.

People in beta testing can finally see a new feature that allows images in journals to be displayed in thumbnails.

FumeFX 3.5 released

Thu, Oct 25 2012 21:32:07 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Afterworks, the company behind FumeFX, one of the most popular smoke animation plugins for 3DS MAX, has announced the release of version 3.5. This plugin allows 3D artists and animators to create realistic simulations for VFX productions.



According to the release log, version 3.5 includes several new and improved features:

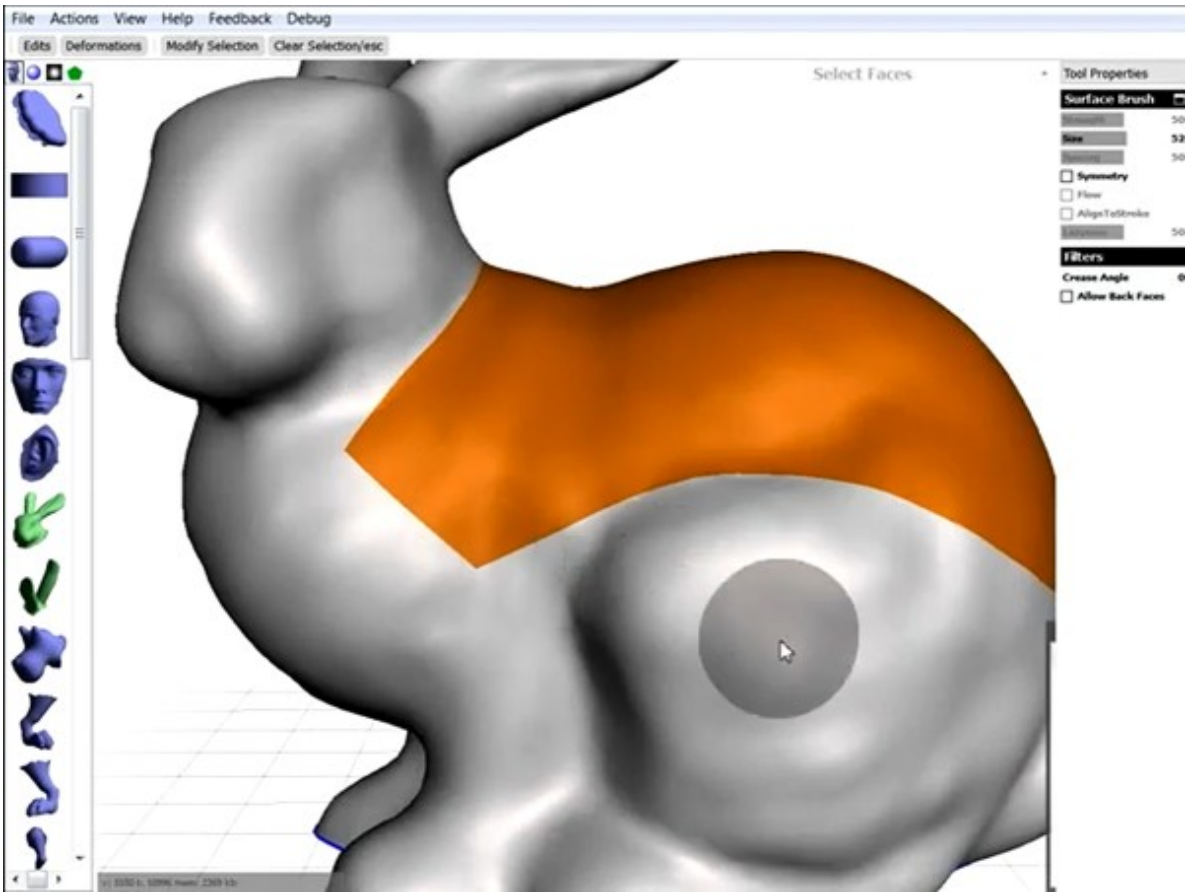
* Boundless grid with complete control over boundaries.
* Added support for Field3D file format.
* Changing the Effector's name will automatically update its name inside the FumeFX UI.
* Continue from cache in a bigger grid.
* Volume emission with Object Source.
* MXS command ffxSilent - no Message box will show up (like Stop/Continue, etc).
* Multiple Scattering for PreviewWindow
* Multiple Scattering option to cast and receive, so if you have a scene with many grids and want to avoid MS computation overhead, this should be handy.

* Ability to imprint various info to the Preview Window output.
* From the Obj/Src rollout, right click on object/src to select it in the viewport that will automatically enable PinUI option. Multi selection is also possible,
* Paths will show inside the Asset Manager
* Pin UI will keep the UI opened even if FumeFX is deselected. You can position lights and objects and GPU PW will update as well.
* Preview Window has a new menu option ''Lock to Viewport'', so you can work on the scene setup in various viewports and PW will always display the chosen one.
* FumeFX Gravity parameter can have negative value
* Sim Loop Mode option to reset sim at the beginning of each loop.
* Added tooltips to output paths text boxes, so that users can see very long paths.
* Added support for picking groups of nodes from Scene Selection window. Works with: objects list, illumination lights list, object source objects list, particle source particle list.
* Added support for changing parameters for FumeFX deflector objects for all group members if grouping button is enabled ('G')

Meshmixer08 released

Thu, Oct 25 2012 17:36:57 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Meshmixer is a small program that provides fun and different modeling options for people to create 3D models. It's free and has been around for a while, often used to create crazy looking results. Today, the developer announced Meshmixer08, the latest version, had been released.



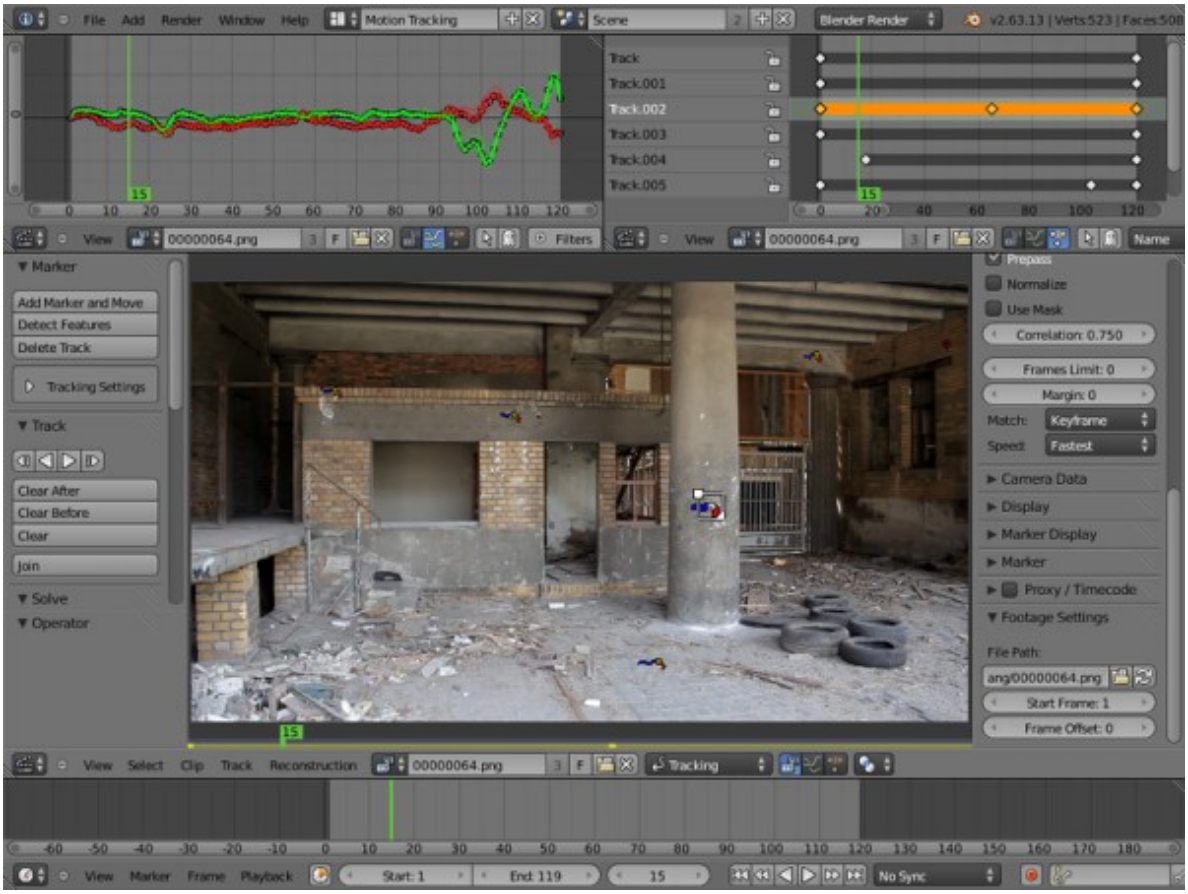
Some of the new features found in this release include: FaceGroup support, Stamp tool, Create Polygons for Stamp, Attract-to-Target brush, improved Booleans, Joins, PlaneCut, Align tool, Brush controls (flow, hold boundary, restrict to group etc), better Transform Widgets, Grid, UI enhancements, and more. the app is free to download and can be found on its site.

How does Blender 3D compare to professional software?

Wed, Oct 24 2012 22:26:38 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Blender 3D has been around for a long time, and is often referred to as the most advanced open source 3D application out there. It has always had a small but strong following, and is seen as the free option for

those who want to dabble in the world of 3D. But Blender has long had the reputation of being hard to use, and missing some key features that professional software like 3DS MAX or Maya have. Several years ago, Blender completely revamped its user interface, and the team has been hard at work to add new features and improve every facet of the application. So now, how does Blender compare with professional tools?



Comparing software, especially things like 3D programs, is a risky proposition, because everyone seems to have a strong opinion on the issue. But a lot of people out there are new to 3D, and may be looking for the best solution to their particular needs. The fact is Blender has evolved a lot in the past few years, so it's useful to look at how much it has advanced, and whether it truly can be a replacement for commercial solutions. Blender 2.64 was released at the beginning of the month, and like every new release this year, has brought a lot of improvements to the table.

The pros

The first and most obvious advantage to Blender is of course the price. Being open source, and distributed for free, you can use Blender free of charge. If you want to use 3DS MAX or Maya, two of the most popular commercial solutions in the industry, be prepared to spend over $3,000. Of course, there are cheaper alternatives, like Cinema4D at around $990, but that's still a lot of money. If you are cash-strapped, then obviously Blender will seem like a good deal.

Another important feature of Blender is how many features it actually has. It can do polygon modeling using Catmull-Clark subdivision, NURBS surfaces, metaballs, vector fonts, bezier and B-spline curves. It has sculpting tools like Paint, Smooth, Pinch, Inflate and Grab. It provides smooth soft selection editing tools for organic modeling, along with a modifier stack. Blender allows you to create a full skeleton for rigging, along with deformers and constraints. You can do 3D painting of your models. It provides full animation tools, high quality rendering using a built-in raytracer, UV unwrapping tools, a physics engine, composition tools, and even a real-time game engine.

Finally, because Blender is open source, it has a very dedicated community which is always customizing the software, which means you often get a lot of options as to your user interface, keyboard functions, and so on. And if you have any question, you can often find free resources that can help you out on the web.

The cons

Even though Blender received a face-lift and now has a better, more intuitive user interface for new users, it still remains a daunting first experience. It doesn't look or even feel like any normal Windows or MacOS software. Part of the reason for this complexity is simply the sheer amount of features it offers, but if you're used to other modeling software, you may find the Blender way of doing things a bit unusual.

The other negative is the small user base. The fact remains that very few studios use Blender, with most of them instead relying on professional solutions. This is particularly important because most 3D artists use a work pipeline which relies on more than one solution. They can use 3DS MAX alongside various scripts, MotionBuilder, in-house tools, plugins that handle things like mocap, game engines, etc. The point here being that the application is just one part of a vast workflow, and in most cases, that application is not Blender, so you may find that some scripts or plugins you rely on simply don't work with Blender.

Bottom line

If you look at individual features, it's very easy to find a solution that does things better than Blender. For example, many people find sculpting better in ZBrush, whereas if you need to make vast environment scenes you may be better off with Vue. But if you need an all-in-one tool, then few solutions out there will match what Blender can give you, and none will match the price. For basic modeling, there's no question that Blender 3D is a top of the line application, and while you may find faults in some of the other parts, like the game engine or physics system, which simply aren't on par with what some commercial solutions offer, maybe you don't have large needs there.

So in the end, if you're new to 3D and want to learn something that costs no money, and will allow you to create professional results, while allowing you to try all facets of 3D creation like sculpting and painting, then Blender is a very viable choice. The old complaints that the software is impossible to learn, or that many functions don't work right, just aren't true anymore. However, if your goal is to get in the industry, and get the skills needed to get employed in a studio, then perhaps it's best that you look for a trial of one of the more professional options, because even though Blender has been around for years, it still hasn't gained much ground in the industry.

Of course, in the end, the choice is yours, and if you get the option to try multiple solutions, then you should. Each application has its own quirks and workflows, so you should find what works best for you.

Vue 11 announced

Wed, Oct 24 2012 18:36:06 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

E-On Software, the company behind Vue, a popular 3D environment and natural technology software, announced the release of Vue 11, its latest version. The new release is expected to ship this coming November, and boosts several new and improved features.

According to the press release, this is a list of new and improved features that can be found in Vue 11:

* **EcoParticles:** This new technology is ideal for the creation of animated rain, snow, waterfalls, explosions, fire, smoke, tornadoes, falling leaves, swarm of insects and more. Any object can be set as a particle source (emitter).
* **EcoParticles as EcoSystems:** EcoParticles are added to any material like a regular EcoSystem material layer. But with EcoParticles, users get in depth control over the way the particles will evolve over time. Users can define the speed, direction, collision properties and duration of life of the particles, as well as subject them to external influences. On top of these new physical settings, all of the classic EcoSystem

configuration parameters are used for particle instance population.
* **EcoParticles Effectors:** Effectors are special objects that will influence the EcoParticles in the scene. Effects like tornadoes, jittering, attraction, etc. are easily created this way.
* **Automatic Weather Effects - Rain and Snow:** These new atmospheric effects enable artists to create anything from gentle spring rain to a tropical storm, a gentle falling snow to a blizzard, with just a few simple clicks. The heaviness, shape, drop size, speed and falling angle of the precipitation is user controllable. Motion blur can be added if desired too. Weather Effects are available for all types of atmospheres.
* **EcoPainter Improvements:** The EcoSystem Painter is completely redesigned to allow even more control and flexibility. Users can now create their own brushes using a combination of effectors. For instance, brushes that will resize and align instances at the same time. There are a number of new brush effects to boot, including the ability to lean or rotate instances, raise or lower them, move them around, etc.
* **Customizable EcoPainter Brushes:** Like the brushes in the Terrain Editor, each EcoPainter brush now has its own dialog that displays all of the parameters that can be adjusted. If users want to display a specific brush parameter directly in the main EcoPainter dialog, they can do so with a click on the corresponding Publish icon. The EcoSystem Selection function is now part of the EcoPainter. This way, users can use the select function to define the instances to work with, directly in the EcoSystem Painter dialog. EcoSystem Instance Selection is now also available in xStream for 3ds Max, Cinema4D and Softimage.
* **EcoSystem Fast Population:** Thanks to a special population mode, Vue can now refresh the EcoSystem population interactively, without the need of any re-population action
* **EcoSystem 360° Population:** Vue can now automatically populate EcoSystems from all directions including below objects. This feature works on any kind of object from basic spheres to complex geometry such as rocks, cars, houses... and all applicable EcoSystem settings are supported.
* **Faster Rendering Speed:** Significant internal optimizations made to Vue 11's rendering engine will result in dramatically accelerated rendering especially on very dense EcoSystem scenes.
* **Illumination Caching:** This technology lets the user re-use GI information over the course of an entire animation thus eliminating the need to re-render the GI pre-pass for every frame. This will dramatically reduce the rendering times of Architectural animations, for instance.
* Many other improvements such as Shared Material layers, Nitrous accelerated graphics core support in 3ds Max, support for latest releases of the Autodesk 2013 products and Cinema4D R14, and more...

The whole suite of applications, including Vue Studio, Vue Infinite, Vue Complete, Vue Esprit, and Vue xStream are expected to ship next month, free of charge for those under their subscription system.

NUKE ModelBuilder features

Wed, Oct 24 2012 18:07:41 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this latest video, The Foundry, creators of NUKE, show off some of the newest features behind ModelBuilder.

Independent Games Festival entry list announced

Wed, Oct 24 2012 17:58:15 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under news

The list of games to be featured at the 15th Annual Independent Games Festival, to be hosted on March 25-29 2013, has been announced. The full list is available on the organization's site.

The Independent Games Festival is one of the most well known indie games showcase out there, and is well recognized as a way for small time developers and artists to display their creations. For this upcoming edition, almost 600 entries have been selected, with games ranging from puzzle games, to shooters and platformers.

IGF 2013 will be giving out prizes to the best entries, including one from Microsoft Studios which guarantees first-party publishing on XBOX Live.

Dark Shadows VFX breakdowns

Tue, Oct 23 2012 23:56:46 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

This behind the scenes video shows some of the CGI environments and characters used in Tim Burton's Dark Shadows starring Johnny Depp.

Artist showcase: Looks Can Kill

Tue, Oct 23 2012 8:59:44 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're happy to showcase the art of Looks Can Kill, creator of some lovely 3D ladies.

LOOKS CAN KILL
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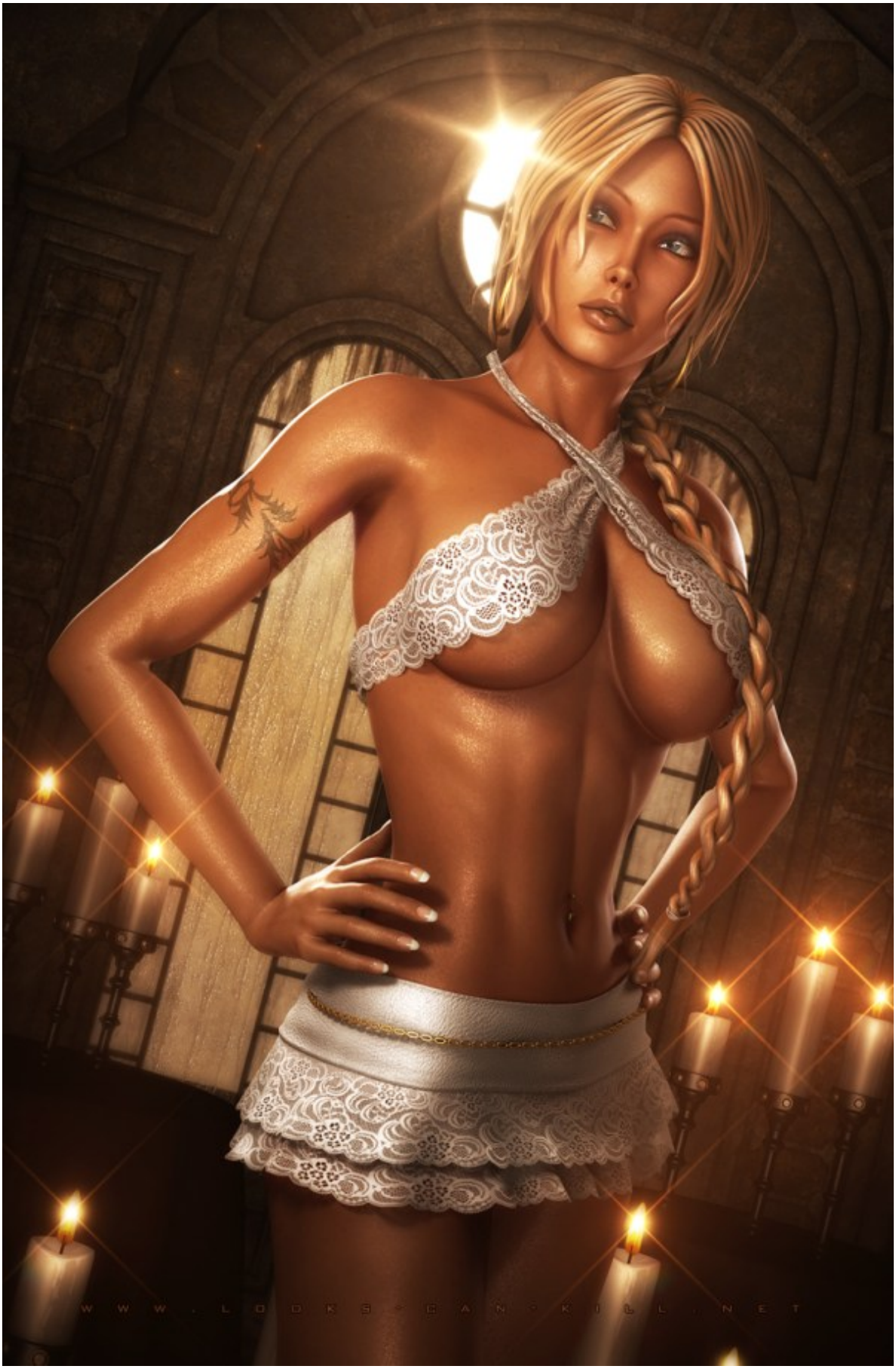

WWW.LOOKSCANKILL.NET

Interview with The Looking Planet

Mon, Oct 22 2012 22:59:38 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Eric Law Anderson, a veteran of short film productions, creator of Horses On Mars which played at the Sundance Film Festival, and more recently working on the animated short **The Looking Planet**, due out next year and currently the object of a Kickstarter campaign.

Could you tell us who you are and what your background is?

I'm originally from Louisville, KY. I grew up in love with movies, especially Star Wars, and started making short films when I was 14. I got my first film job as a PA on a feature film shooting in Danville, KY where I met a bunch of like-minded people who liked making short films, too. We started making films together under the name Giant Dolphin Pictures. Eventually, our core group ended up at film school. I went to USC where I got an MFA in animation. My student film HORSES ON MARS played at festivals all over the world, including the Sundance Film Festival, and won several awards, including a College Emmy and an Audience Award for best short film at the Los Angeles Film Festival, as well as qualification for Academy Award consideration. From the success of that film, I started my professional career at Columbia Pictures writing a sci-fi feature film titled GIANTS (unproduced) based on my original story with co-writer J.C. Baldwin. I've worked as a visual effects artist for a number of TV shows, and I currently produce animation for an aerospace company working on NASA and JPL space exploration missions. I also continue to write screenplays and develop my own material, including continuing to produce small budget films with my friends under the Giant Dolphin Pictures banner.

How did you get the idea to make The Looking Planet?

The original idea for this film goes back to a short story I wrote before film school that was inspired both by a book I was reading at the time and from watching the movie APOLLO 13. The book, PARADIGMS LOST by physicist John L. Casti, is about several mysteries in science still to be answered. There is a chapter in the book about the search for ET and the various computations for the Drake Equation, and some specific ideas about the odds of certain aspects of the equation got me thinking in a certain direction. Then I saw APOLLO 13 and had an epiphany during a scene near the climax of the film. An idea about hyper-dimensional beings building the universe suddenly took hold in my mind. So the original ideas behind my story go back a ways, but I believe the premise to be more timely than ever considering the current state of the human

exploration of space.

Who is involved in the project?

This has always been a very small production. Besides myself, my good friend Tim Cleary was the first to get involved by doing a lot of the early CG models. Jason Hayes also was involved pretty much from the beginning as the composer. Jason is best known for his scores on World of Warcraft and other Blizzard titles like Warcraft, Starcraft and Diablo. We have been good friends ever since meeting on the festival circuit back when I was traveling around with Horses on Mars. A small group of character animators came on to help with a lot of the facial animation performances. Many were animation students from the College for Creative Studies in Detroit, and others are working professionals, classmates and good friends of mine from USC.

How long have you been working on it, and what kind of budget did you spend?

The project has something of long history. It really began as my thesis film at film school, but just as I had completed the motion capture shoot for it and put together the first rough cut, I sold my pitch to Columbia Pictures for GIANTS. I put the project on the shelf at that point. I thought I was done making shorts. Well, it didn't quite work out that way. After two years of development, Sony shelved the feature and I came back to the short wanting to find a way to make it work. There were a large number of technical problems to solve related to the original motion capture shoot. At the time, there wasn't a lot of software support for motion capture. It was a bit of a nightmare. So it kept getting put on the shelf as a series of other things came along and the realities of trying to pay the rent got in the way. Finally, after reshooting the motion capture, and solving the main technical issues thanks to the tremendous progress in mocap technology, I made the commitment to get it finished. I had to start over in a lot of ways. But there was something about this project -- I just couldn't give up on it. I might be crazy for sticking it out this long, but it's been over 2 years now just since starting all over, and I have spent about $15,000 from my own savings to get it to this point. A lot of that was for the character animators, models, some rigging and software costs.

Can you talk a bit about the software programs and other tools you used to make it?

First, I shot the motion capture at USC. I used MotionBuilder to handle the motion capture data and brought that into Maya. Originally, I started with the render engine Arnold for rendering everything. I was an early Arnold user, and if I had my choice, I'd use it for the whole film. I really love it. But for practical reasons, I am now in the process of converting everything over to Mentalray so I can get this on renderfarms and get freelance help to get through all the remaining shots. *(Update: Solid Angle, the makers of the Arnold Software, have given the film their full support and they now have everything they need to finish rendering the film in Arnold, not Mentalray)* I've also been using the plugin Vue 9 xStream for Maya. We're using Adobe After Effects for compositing and Premiere for editing.

You recently started a Kickstarter project to fund the rest, can you explain how that came about?

I had been doing a lot of the film on my own, and it was taking a long time. Too long. And then I learned I was going to be the father of twins. As soon as that dawned on me what that meant, I knew my time to finish the film was suddenly even more limited. I realized if I do not finish the film before their due date, I

will have to abandon it. I was faced with a choice: just give up now -- or fight to make it happen by finding the the funds I would need to ramp up the scale of the production and finish in the time I have left. So I turned to kickstarter to save the film. Without the funds the film will simply not get completed. It's now or never to finish this long journey.

What made you decide to use Kickstarter instead of another mode of financing?

I have other filmmaker friends who have had success with it, so I thought I'd give it a shot. I did do some fund raising through private channels, but that wasn't going to be enough. Kickstarter seemed to be more oriented towards film and creative projects than other places, and in the end, that seemed more important than what percentage they take off the top.

From what you've seen in the industry, how are short animation films doing, is it easier to make them than before?

I think with the way the tools have progressed, its now easier than ever to make polished, professional quality work on much smaller budgets. Especially with animation. When I started there were no websites where you could download high quality affordable models. Just that alone is huge. There really are no more excuses anymore for not making a short that looks good. The flip side is, there is now so much sophisticated media coming at us from so many directions, and so many people producing things, it sometimes seems more daunting than ever to get your work noticed. And I still see a divide between what works well on the internet as viral videos and what works in the cinematic setting of a dark theater with an audience. I don't know if you are good at one, you are necessarily good at both. I say that because I feel my own work does not translate well to small screens and internet attention spans. I hope in the coming years of the wild west of the internet, festivals with theatrical screenings don't go away, because that is where the heart of short cinema will always be. Technology will change, and maybe people's attention spans will continue to shorten, but one thing that certainly will never change, people always want to be told a good story. And that's where you should always start -- you have to tell a good story.

How has feedback been so far, both towards the project and the financing campaign?

The feedback and support so far have been great. I had a kickstarter veteran write me within hours of launching, offering advice on some goofs I'd made. Extremely nice and helpful. There seems to be a community of support at kickstarter which I didn't really expect. And overall, people have have responded very positively to the project. More then ever, I feel like there could be an audience for this film when its done. And in the end, that is what we are really after. Finding that audience. Kickstarter seems to be a way to let that audience get involved and invested in the work early on rather than just being the passive recipients of it, which is a really interesting paradigm shift.

Should you get the funds, when will the project be completed?

March 2013. Absolutely. No later. Definitely no later.

RFID chips allows sculpture viewers to go digital

Mon, Oct 22 2012 19:37:40 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The John Natsoulas Gallery debuted the Davis Interactive Transmedia Sculpture Walk earlier this year, which allows people to see dozens of scultures of all sorts by local artists. Some of these are also placed in various public settings across Northern California. What makes this show unique however is the fact that people who see the real life version can communicate with those who see the virtual, digital depictions. Now, a book has even been released with links to these messages.

The company XtremeSignPost uses RFID chips which were embedded in concrete, near each sculpture, in order for people and artists to send messages, videos and comments to others. Anyone with an RFID capable cellphone could participate. The book itself, called Davis Mural Team, contains links to videos about the interactive murals that are part of the Transmedia Art Walk, and also embeds RFID tags.

XtremeSignPost uses RFID technology to integrate and share consumer experiences with personalized products, and is one of several companies that helped make Interactive Transmedia Sculptures possible.

Hellacious Artistic Imagination at DeviantART

Mon, Oct 22 2012 19:23:07 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

With Halloween coming, a time when artists often depict demons and sacred displays, DeviantART ask some pretty profound questions to the readers, about Dante and censorship, after showing some classical paintings as well as recent artist renditions.

Here's the questions on the table:

1- Does the artistic exploration of theological subjects make you in any way nervous, especially in a time when the very act of depicting one religion's god and messenger can have such great impact?

2- Does Dante's attempt to match appropriate crimes with appropriate punishments make sense or does the concept eternal damnation in torment ruin his otherwise equitable distribution of justice?

3- What are an artist's responsibilities when depicting subjects sacred to some who will be seeing the resulting artwork? Is caring for even a moment about possible repercussions a form of censorship and repression against art and the artist?

4- Do you think it's fair that remembering to pray at the last moment gets you a Get Out of Hell Free pass?

5- Are you currently living in one of the nine rings of hell right now? What is happening there?

Check out the thread on DA to read artists' opinions.

Dragon Age 3 concept art

Sun, Oct 21 2012 22:05:06 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under news

Dragon Age 3, the Bioware sequel to the two previous popular titles, was announced earlier this year. Very little is known still to this day, but it seems that now the company is starting to ramp up development, with more information getting released. This weekend, some new concept art images appeared on their blog, hinting at what the game will look like.

Making of wood textures

Sun, Oct 21 2012 21:42:12 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Those who have to create textures know how hard it can sometimes be to have their textures look good, and be seamless. This short video shows the process of taking a piece of wood, and making it a seamless texture file.

Getting started with ZBrush

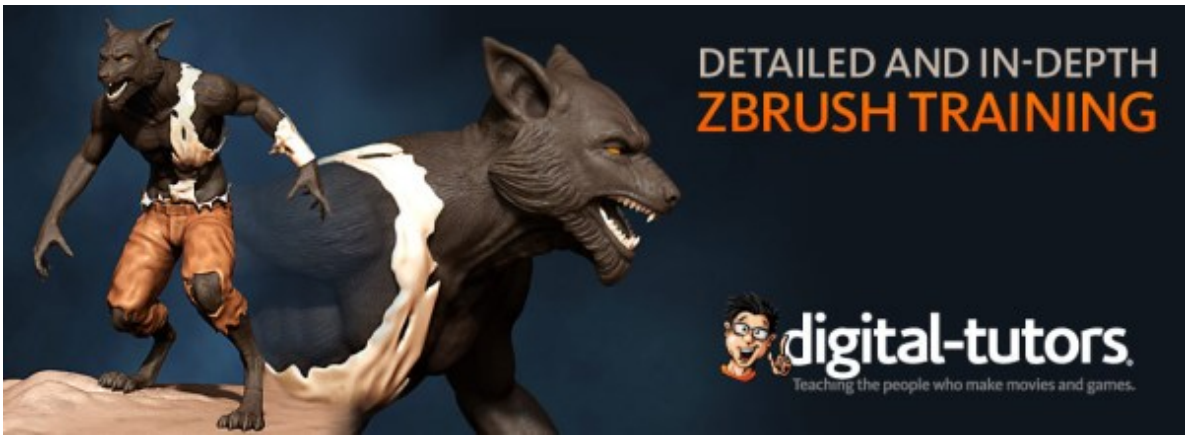
Sun, Oct 21 2012 2:57:41 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

ZBrush is a digital sculpting software allowing 3D artists to create unique models using a building method similar to clay, as opposed to traditional modeling products. As such, it quickly became very popular with many people, from artists to game designers. In this *Getting Started* feature, let's see how you can get going using ZBrush, and what resources are available to you around the web.

The first thing you will need to do in order to get started with ZBrush is to go to the Pixologic web site in order to buy and download ZBrush. For you to use the product you will need to pay $699 for a license. This isn't cheap, but compared with traditional modeling tools made for professionals, like Autodesk 3DS MAX or Maya, which cost thousands of dollars, it's a relatively decent cost. ZBrush is a software package used in many industries, from new users to professional game creators and movie makers, and the company has kept a very simple pricing structure. Buying ZBrush is a fairly pain-free process.

The Pixologic site isn't only a place where you can download the application, but it also features a lot of good getting started material. If you go to the video tutorials section, you will find dozens of short videos introducing you to the interface, along with the main features of ZBrush, and is a great place to start with. These videos are free and will take you a few hours to go through. You can also find a link to the documentation on the official site, but the wiki format it uses makes it fairly hard to navigate, and some pages can be incomplete. I suggest you skip those for now, and use that documentation only for reference.

Once you're done with the free videos on the official site, perhaps you would like a more substantial amount of video training. One source that is very popular is the Digital-Tutors site, which as of this post, has 1,843 ZBrush videos, spanning over a hundred hours. This material isn't free however, and will require you to take a $45 monthly subscription to access it. Another popular site that provides paid video training is The Gnomon Workshop, but this one is more expensive and charges for each title. I suggest avoiding them unless you have a large training budget. Another tutorial site, also offering monthly access at $45 per month, is ZBrush Workshops, which provides over 32 hours of training.



Finally, another site with good video tutorials is CG TUTS+, which provides over 80 free videos on specific topics. One thing to be careful however is to check which version of ZBrush they cover. Right now, you will likely use version 4, but a lot of tutorials were made for version 3. Your mileage may vary. Also, Pixologic has a list of *'authorized'* training providers, which isn't a guarantee on them being your best bets, but you may want to check it out.

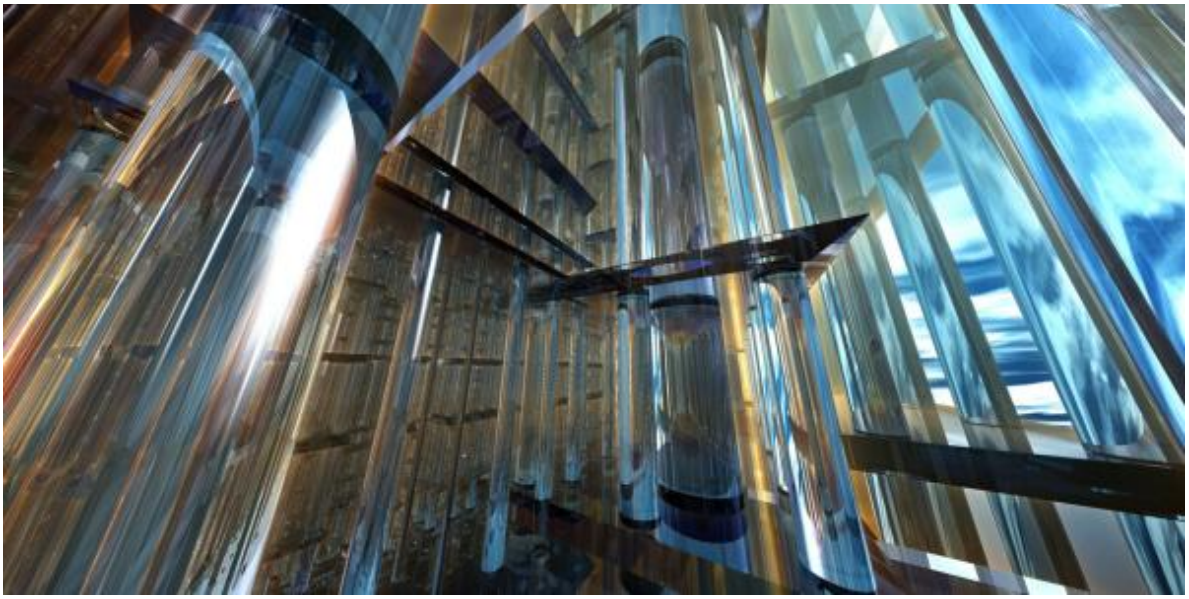
Once you've learned how to use the software, and went through more video tutorials than you may ever need, you might want to check out some other resources. ZBrush is a sculpting program, and as such it heavily relies on things like textures, alphas and brushes, in order to allow you to sculpt your models and paint them. You can use generic texture sites, like CG Textures which contains over 65,000+ high resolution textures, but remember to also visit ZBrush Central which is the main forum for ZBrush. There, you can find a lot of galleries, works in process, and links to useful resources that people find around the net.

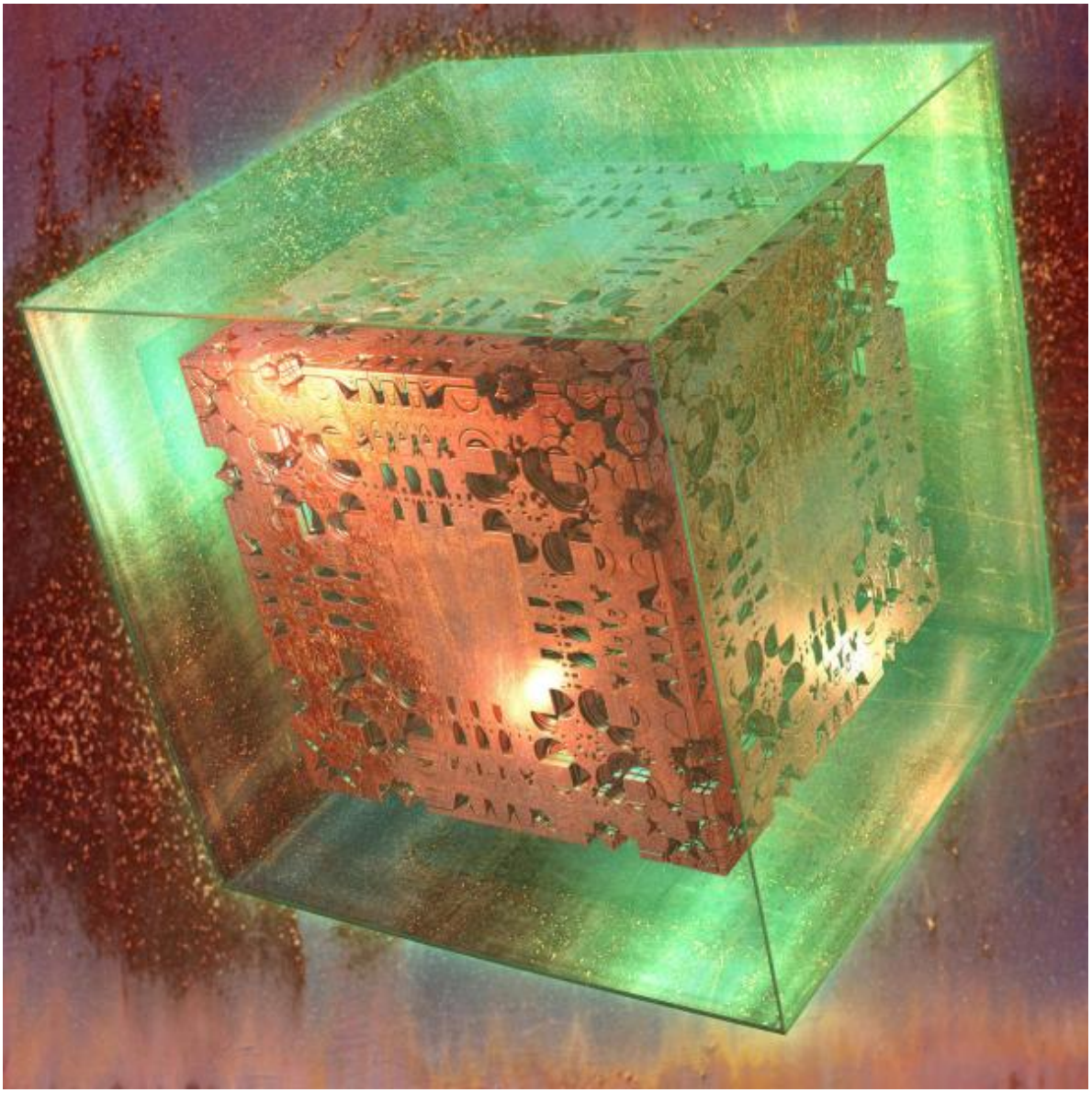
So now that you know where to get the software, training, and resources to use, you should be ready to launch yourself into the world of ZBrush, and start creating 3D models for all your needs.

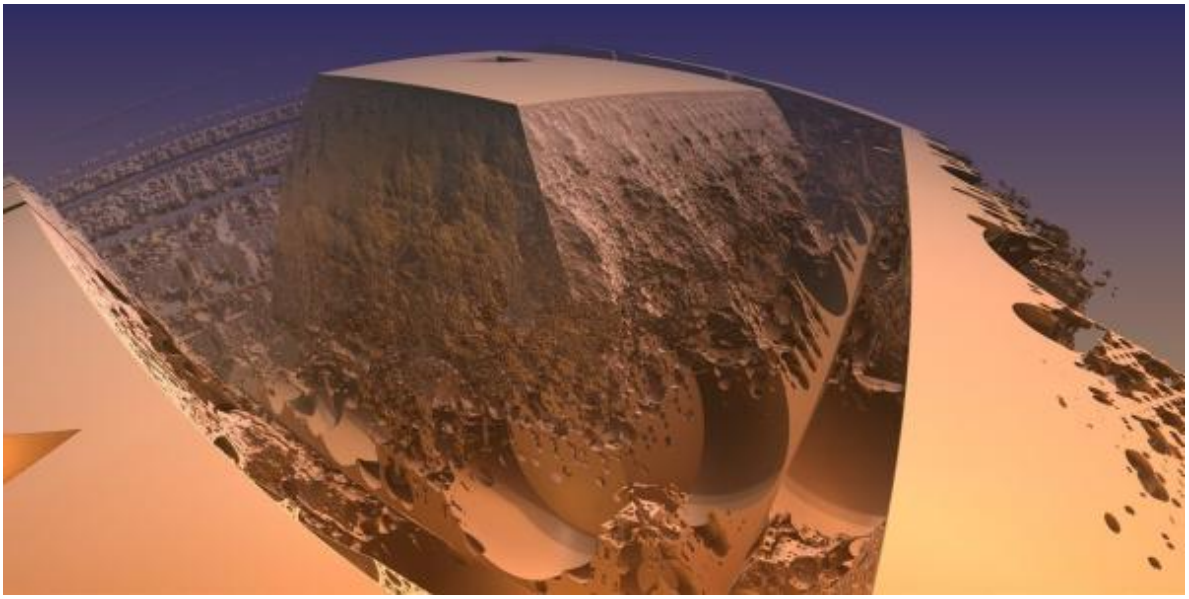
Artist showcase: Mark J Brady

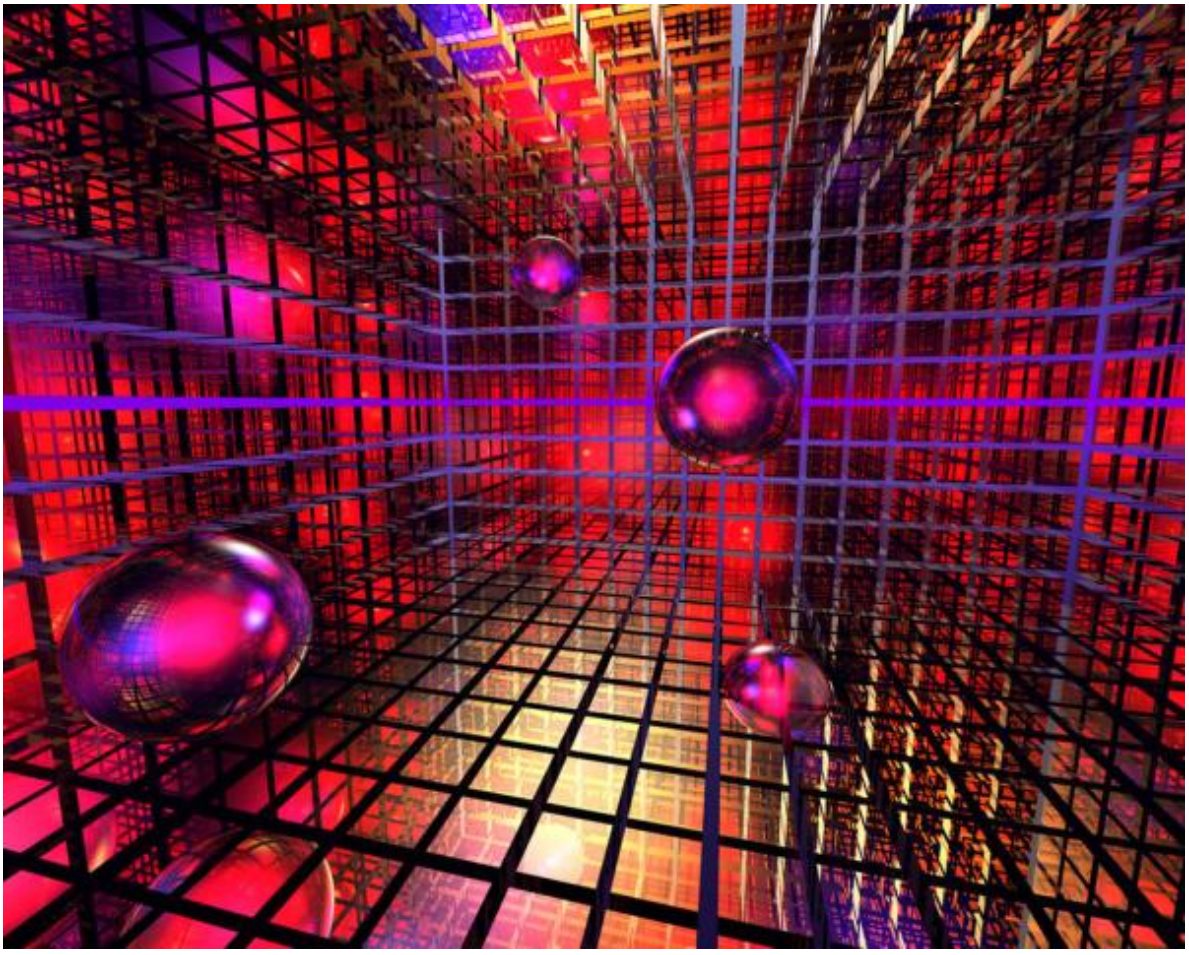
Sat, Oct 20 2012 7:49:34 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

This weekend we're glad to showcase the work of Mark J Brady, a digital artist using fractals to create very unique and interesting looking images.









JefeCheck 1.5 released for free

Fri, Oct 19 2012 22:11:36 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

JefeCheck 1.5, a free, easy to use yet highly flexible high resolution image flipbook for film and TV post work, has been released, and the application is now free for all to download, running on Windows, Linux and MacOS.

This tool is a very interesting software program for artists, technical directors, or anyone working in the post production world of video or film projects. According to the site, some of the features include:

* Hardware Accelerated High Resolution RAM based image sequence playback.
* Many, many formats (DPX, OpenEXR, TIFF, TGA, JPEG, BMP, etc)
* Play up to four 2K streams at once on commodity hardware 4K playback capable (hardware dependent)
* Different viewport layouts (single, 2x2, side by side, top and bottom)
* Real Time transformations (zoom, pan, flip, flop)
* Once, Loop and Ping Pong playback modes.
* DPX Metadata Display
* Real Time Aspect Ratio modifications, with image deformation (for anamorphic) or cropping with black bars.
* Automatic Proxy Generation
* Area of Interest loading
* Low hardware requirements
* Fully multi-threaded
* Process image in Real Time and Full Resolution using gaming level hardware.
* Easy to write plug-in system based on XML text files and the OpenGL Shading Language.
* FXs are stackable, apply as many as you want.
* Flexible LUT format
* Render to image sequences.

The site offers a donate option for those who want to contribute to the development process.

DeviantART celebrates Spirit Day

Fri, Oct 19 2012 19:28:05 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

October is the cyber bullying awareness month in the US, and today in particular is also Spirit Day, an international event to raise awareness of bullying. The day was started in 2010 as a response to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth who took their lives due to bullying. To help the cause, DeviantART is hosting a gallery of works dedicated to the event.

Purple is the color for Spirit Day, and DA is encouraging its users to paint their avatars purple, and submit artwork to the gallery if they want to. Meanwhile, GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) is hosting various events across the web in order to raise awareness of the issue.

Dishonored concept art

Thu, Oct 18 2012 20:01:33 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under news

Fans of gaming concept art are in luck today as Bethesda, publishers behind the game Dishonored, sent over a series of concept art images to PC Gamer, along with commentary from the art director.

Dishonored is a game that received a lot of news in the gaming press recently, and a very good metacritic score of 89. As a tactile first-person action game that thrusts you into the role of a supernatural assassin driven by a thirst for revenge, its art style is fairly interesting. Sebastien Mitton, art director for the game, reveals that some of the concept art really helped shape the vision for the game.

It's always interesting to see concept art, and usually we get to see it as leaks, so the commentaries are a nice touch.

Interview with Mike's Amazing World

Thu, Oct 18 2012 4:42:36 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Mike Voiles from Mike's Amazing World, a site that quickly grew into a large database of comic books and series, where anyone can search for a specific title, publisher or even date and year.

Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

I am a lifelong comic collector. I got my first DC comic in 1980 and have been a fan ever since. As a teen, I got the idea of owning every DC comic ever published. Beginning in 1987 I started buying every DC comic and working my way back through the older material. When I started I didn't know how difficult/expensive getting all of them would be. 25 years later I own 90% of everything that company has published since 1935.

I currently work as a professional web developer building and configuring software for medical research institutions. I run Mike's Amazing World of Comics on the side for fun.

What can people find at Mike's Amazing World?

There are many features on the site which cover the full range of comic book publishing history from the 1930s to the present. The most popular section is the Newsstand/Time Machine which displays covers for all the comics published by major publishers during any given month dating back to the 1930s. The database on the site has not only all the covers, but creator credits, story title and recaps, character appearances, release dates and more. The DC section has a story reprint guide, a trade paperback list including contents, and researched articles about topics related to DC comic history. There are also gallery sections for Hostess ads of the 70s/80s, public service ads, cartoon strips, and Saturday morning cartoon ads.

My newest feature is the DC Universe Chronology which is my attempt to put every single story published within the DC universe into linear chronological order based on the events in the story.

When was this project started and what was your goal for it?

The website started in late 1997 or early 1998. I was just beginning a new career in the technology industry and decided to learn how to build web pages. My first page was just a want list of all the DC comics that I needed at the time. Over time I added additional features and publishers including Marvel. The current site is far more than I originally envisioned. I do the site mostly for myself. Even if no one else used it, I'd still be doing it. If other people find the information I share entertaining or informative, that is a bonus.

How do you get all the material used in your databases?

Since I was a child I have made and kept lists of all kinds of information. Most of the DC related information was pulled directly from my personal 50,000+ issue comic collection. Other information has been pulled from a variety of sources including trade publications and the web.

Did any of the publishers like Marvel or DC ever contact you about the site?

Not in any official capacity. The former publisher of DC Comics has contacted me a few times, but it was mostly in a personal/fan context, not in his official role at DC. Other current/former comic creators have also contacted me over the years, and the site has been mentioned in several books about comics. The only official contact I've had with any publisher was a job interview for Dark Horse several years ago. I didn't get the job.

How has the the feedback been, are there a lot of people using the site?

The feedback on the site has always been extremely positive. The site usage has consistently grown over the years. I don't know what defines a lot of use. I'm sure I don't get as many visitors as Google for example, but I'm happy with it.

What proved to be the hardest part in the project?

I wouldn't categorize any parts of the project as hard or difficult. It is time consuming though. Everything on the site has been personal designed, coded, and maintained by me. Additionally all the research and data entry is my own work. It's a full time job that I do on top of my real job for no pay. I don't make a dime off the site. I've spent tens of thousands of hours on it over the years.

According to your Facebook page you once thought about starting your own comic, is that still in your plans?

When I was in high school, that was my goal. That was a long time ago. I have no such plans now although I would like to work for DC Comics someday.

Which is your favorite series of all?

My favorite comic from a reading perspective was Sandman by Neil Gaiman. Preacher also rates very high. From a collecting standpoint, Action Comics is my favorite title to collect. I've got nearly a 60-year complete run on that series.

LightBox Interactive layoffs rumored

Wed, Oct 17 2012 22:37:13 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

After yesterday's news about layoffs at Double Negative, today we hear more rumors about layoffs at LightBox, as Sony pulls financial support.

According to insider sources and recent tweets, it seems like LightBox Interactive, the studio that worked on games like Warhawk and Starhawk, may be having major financial problems as Sony pulls the plug on their exclusive title. No word yet from the company confirming or denying those rumors, or on how many people are affected.

Thea GPU Interactive Render

Wed, Oct 17 2012 21:12:26 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Thea Render released a preview of their new GPU render engine which provides near instant rendering, allowing 3D artists to view the result right in their work view.

How to run a successful Kickstarter campaign

Wed, Oct 17 2012 19:17:43 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Kickstarter has become a very popular way to finance projects, especially in the art and content creation areas, where other types of financing may not be available to you. But not all projects get funded. There are things you need to keep in mind about using Kickstarter, and tips that may improve your chances to run a successful campaign.

The first thing to keep in mind is having **realistic expectations**. Even if you've heard about some people raising millions of dollars through the site, like the Pebble E-Paper Watch, chances of you doing the same are slim to none, unless you're already a well known celebrity in your particular niche. In fact, most art projects who get successfully funded seem to raise around $5,000 to $25,000. Remember that you only receive the money if you reach your goal, so that goal should be realistic.

You also need to **be careful not to over-promise**. When you create your project, you can offer incentives to backers, based on the amount of money they put in. But if you start offering swag like t-shirts or mugs, then remember that you may end up being stuck creating and shipping hundreds of shirts and mouse pads instead of working on your main project. Shipping them internationally can also cost a lot. The trend lately has been to keep offerings to just your actual finished products, with maybe a few simple extra items, like signed copies, or maybe even a few posters.

Another tip is to clearly explain on your campaign page **why people should be interested in backing you**. Remember that there are thousands of projects appearing on Kickstarter, so anyone going there will have a vast selection to choose from. If you're creating something new, tell them why the world needs what you intend to make. Let them know how they will personally benefit. Post as much information and work-in-progress pictures as you can. Incentives can be a great start, but a lot of people back projects based on what they think is most worthy, not so much for the physical goods.

One tradition with Kickstarter projects is that **people expect regular updates** about your project. It's important that you always keep your backers informed as to how the campaign is doing, when you get funded, and what's happening with your project afterward. Most people are fairly flexible if, for example, your project ends up taking more time than expected, but you should let them know at every step of the way. Be transparent and provide constant updates.

If you browse the site for various projects, you may notice almost all of them provide a video. **Your Kickstarter video is the most important piece for your campaign**. It's what people look at to decide if they want to give you money, before even reading the description. So you need to make sure it looks professional, and conveys your message clearly. Some people decide to do a funny video, while others keep it serious. That's completely up to you, depending on the type of project you're doing. You should keep it fairly short at around 3 minutes, and you should take the time needed to do the post-production work to make it look great.

Finally, even if you're an artist or content creator, you need to remember to **treat your Kickstarter campaign like a business**. Just because you think it's a good idea, that doesn't mean others will just flock to your page. You need to market your idea, send targeted pitches, tell others in your niche about it, buy ads, and so on. You have to do everything you can to make your project known to others, and be prepared to get feedback. A lot of people will respond negatively to any new creative idea, that's just the way it is. But if you took the time needed before starting your project to make sure you're doing things the right way, then you should feel confident enough not to let them get to you.

In the end, the most important goal is whether or not you reach your financial goal, which then allows you to create your project.

Lifelike 3D Human competition

Wed, Oct 17 2012 0:51:46 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The Lifelike 3D Human competition was announced last month and is aimed at any 3D artist who would like to create a realistic scene for a model, with the potential of winning up to $21,000 worth in prizes.

The deadline is approaching for this competition, but there's still plenty of time for artists to join in. This event is sponsored by a large number of 3D sites and forums, including AXYZ Design, CG River and CG Society. The 3D human model is provided, and the contestants are asked to create photo-realistic scenes for that model, with prizes going for Best Photo Studio Lighting Setup rendering and Best Architectural Space rendering.

The deadline is November 5th, and the winners will be announced on November 20th and receive credits at various 3D marketplaces around the web.

Overgrowth Alpha AI tuning

Wed, Oct 17 2012 0:31:14 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under videos

The developers behind Overgrowth, an indie action game, posted a very interesting video demo showing how difficult tuning a game AI can be.

Double Negative rumored to lay off 200+ workers (Updated)

Tue, Oct 16 2012 21:06:23 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

In an industry that never seems to be getting a break, there are rumors today on Twitter that seem to indicate the London based studio Double Negative may be laying off 200 or more workers.

Double Negative is a well known and respected visual effects studio which took part in popular projects like Harry Potter, Inception and Iron Man 2. It was set up in 1998 and employs over 1,000 people. There is no comment as of yet from the company on whether these rumors are true.

Update: FXguide got to talk to the company which denied the high layoff numbers, but confirmed some people were let go, without saying how many. They said in part: *''The decision to streamline our operation for the time being is a natural part of the cycle of our industry.''*

Artist showcase: GENZOMAN

Tue, Oct 16 2012 9:06:11 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today, we're happy to showcase the wonderful art of Gonzalo, coming in from Chile better known as GENZOMAN.

GENZO

GENZO

GERO

CG sharks for Kon-Tiki

Mon, Oct 15 2012 23:17:46 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

If you like sharks, or even if they scare you when going to the beach, you may want to check out some VFX sharks, created for the feature film Kon-Tiki and which look very photo-realistic, in this behind the scenes video.

The lies we tell ourselves

Mon, Oct 15 2012 20:26:25 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The Awl, a New York based news outlet, has published a very interesting list of 21 lies writers tell themselves, which actually could apply to any type of content creator or artist.

Among those lies, we find things like **all you need to be a writer is talent**, which we all know is not true, there's marketing, connections, luck and so much more. **I'm almost done**, which is a lie so many of us have said when we look at an unfinished piece and hope to be done soon, but in fact spend many more hours until it's good enough. **I don't care that my frenemy from grad school got a million dollars for that literary crossover novel**, which could apply to watching artists sell paintings for millions, a VFX producer getting a Hollywood deal, or even a game designer getting hired by a large development house. We all get jealous, it happens.

Then there's the smaller lies, like **I'm only on social media because I have to be to promote X**, **I'm only going to go on Facebook/Twitter/Tumblr for a few more minutes** and **if you put something on the Internet, no one will read it**. This last one is a personal demon of mine...

Pepsi ad behind the scenes

Mon, Oct 15 2012 18:22:15 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

A new behind the scenes video shows how a new Pepsi ad was created in Australia, using iPads to speed up

footage, and Photoshop to do post-production work.

Making of Halo 4 infinity multiplayer

Mon, Oct 15 2012 18:16:32 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under videos

The team behind the upcoming game Halo 4 released a video showing some behind the scenes content, and talking about how they made the multiplayer content. The video goes into some details on how the team put together the maps, creatures and objects for the game.

Company launches Pinterest style website maker

Mon, Oct 15 2012 18:01:47 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Pinterest brought to the web a very interesting unique design. Instead of the traditional blog style, with content flowing from top to bottom, it uses cells going from left to right and filling the whole page. The result is a much more visual experience. Since then, many other sites have outright copied the design, or at least inspired themselves, to varying results. Now, a company called Echo launched a new visualization

plugin for companies to create this style of websites for their own services.

The company said in a press release that the new plugin allows data to be displayed in this way, and can link to their Echo SteamServer which can bring in real time data from YouTube, Spotify, Facebook and more. It allows designers to create web sites with this same visual appearance, without having to reinvent the wheel.

It remains to be seen whether the sites who do adopt a similar design style will get as much success as Pinterest did, but it's not surprising to see companies come out with such solutions, since the design style has proven so popular in the first place.

The Goon Kickstarter project well underway

Sun, Oct 14 2012 15:11:15 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Late last week, fans of *The Goon*, the popular comic series about mobsters, zombies and killer robots, received some good news in the form of a Kickstarter announcement. The team at Blur Studio, Dark Horse Comics, and Eric Powell, creator of the series, got together to launch a Kickstarter campaign to turn the book into a full featured movie production. And just 3 days after it started, the financing goal is already 1/4 of the way there, with over $100,000 pledged from 1,400 backers.

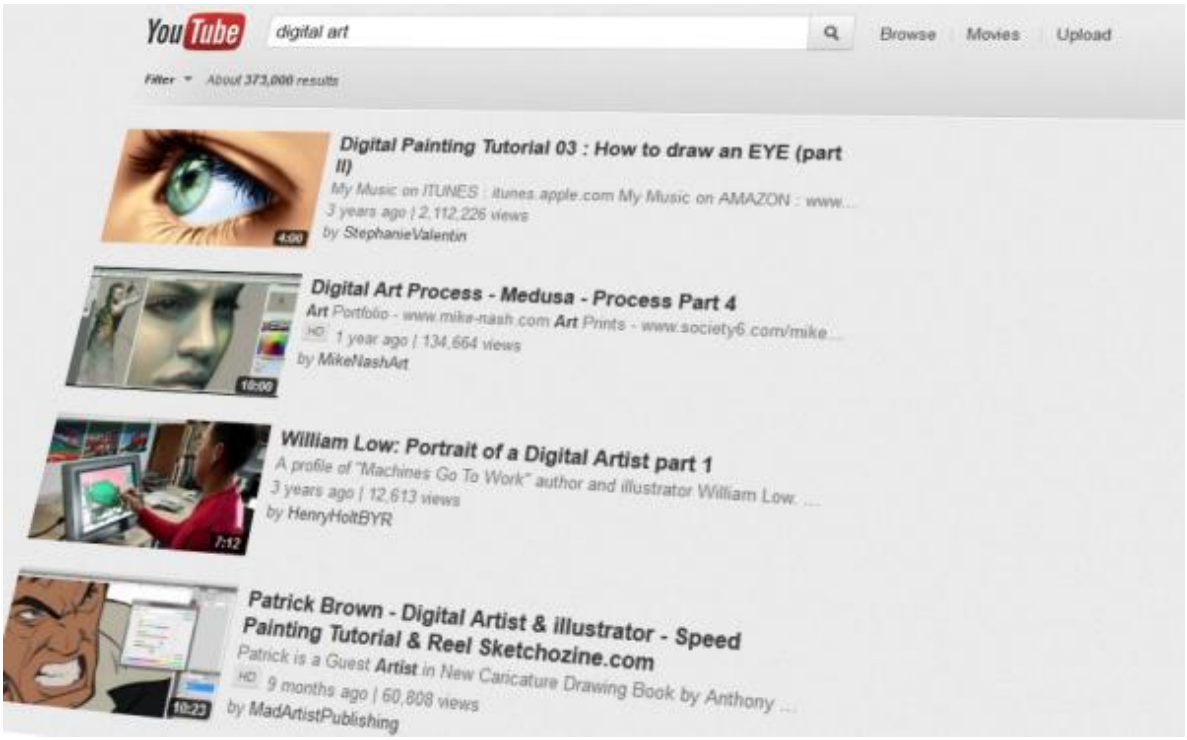
Kickstarter has become a very popular platform in recent years, especially for creative projects. According to Tim Miller and Jeff Fowler, directors at Blur Studios, the team tried to pitch this project at traditional Hollywood studios, without much success. From a recent interview we learn that most big studios aren't willing to risk a PG-13 animated movie. So instead, they decided to use Kickstarter and get fans to donate $400,000 in order to turn the movie into reality.

From early numbers, it does seem like the project is well under way, and has attracted a lot of attention among fans and media alike. They aren't the first to do it either, with Penny Arcade getting over $500,000 this past summer to help run their site, and the popular YouTube VFX maker Freddie Wong getting $273,000 for the series Video Game High School.

YouTube search changes

Sat, Oct 13 2012 20:10:17 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Late yesterday, Google announced new changes to YouTube, improvements to the search function that follows previous changes they had done in August.



The basic idea behind the new search algorithm is to bring more relevant videos to people. Previously, doing a search on YouTube would show results based on clicks, meaning how often people went to a particular video. Now, starting yesterday, the search function looks at how long people watched those videos, instead of just how many people started watching.

What this means is that tricks like using a clever title or preview image aren't enough to rank high, the video content has to be good as well, because if a lot of people click but no one watches through to the end, the video won't rank well at all for searches. This is good news for video creators who want their content to rank well, and bad news for people trying to game the system.

The company also announced better metrics for YouTube content creators, so they will be able to know how long people watch their videos, and what type of engagement they are getting.

Interview with Gorogoa

Sat, Oct 13 2012 3:23:58 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Jason Roberts, the creator of Gorogoa, an innovative game which uses puzzles to display a hand-illustrated world, with tiles coming together to reveal vast animated pictures.

Could you briefly describe Gorogoa?

Gorogoa is a lovingly hand-illustrated world suspended inside of a unique puzzle. To solve the puzzle, the player rearranges a few tiles on a simple grid, placing them next to or on top of one another. But each tile is also a window into a different part of the game world--or perhaps into a different world--and each window plays like its own little game. The key to progressing never lies within one tile, but in the connections between tiles...

Who is behind the project, and who came up with the idea?

The game was designed, developed, and illustrated by Jason Roberts.

What made you decide to create such a game, were you inspired by something else?

I've always wanted to work on something that would be a visual art project and also an intricate puzzle. This game began as an idea for an interactive comic with panels that could move around and interact with each other, and was also in an abstract sense inspired by card games (using magical cards that transform over time). Gradually the current story and themes developed, hopefully in line with the mechanics.

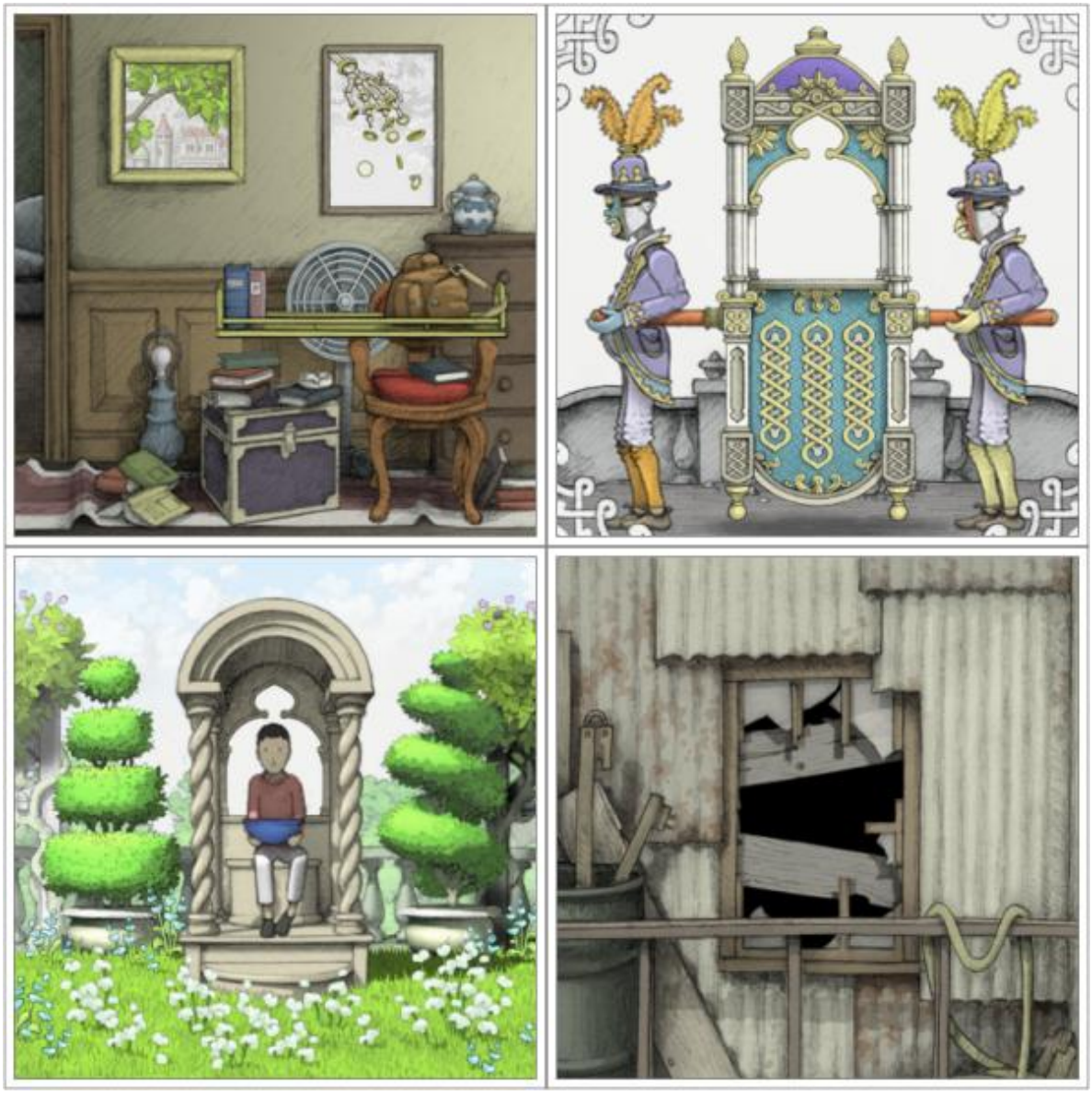
For you, is this mostly a game, or an art expression?

The two aren't exactly separate in my mind. But I will say that the project began as something other than a

game and then became more game-like as it went along, so making a game per se was only a part of my motivation.

How hard was it to create, and how much time did it take?

I've been working mostly full time for over a year. But early on I went down a lot of blind alleys, and had to learn the right way (or at least the less wrong way) to make a game. Producing the art, and especially animations, remains the most time-consuming part of the process.



What software programs and other tools did you use to make it?

The current game engine is coded from scratch in Java. I use Photoshop to compose and color the drawings, and Blender to construct 3D scenes and animations on which the art is based.

Could you walk us through the process of making these tiles?

Drawings are done in pencil on paper, then scanned and colored in Photoshop. A typical scene consists of multiple drawings, each a different layer of the scene that can change and move independently. Often the layers of the scene correspond to different planes in 3D space, based on scenes constructed in Blender.

How has feedback been so far, is this proving to be a popular project?

Feedback has been very positive. I'll undoubtedly be making some refinements to the design based on player feedback (of which I had very little prior to releasing the demo), but overall a lot of people seem to

really like the game.

Do you plan on porting the game to other systems or maybe even phones?

Definitely. I think the game would work great on a touch screen device. In many ways that may be its most natural home.

What other projects is your team planning for the future?

I've still got a ways to go on this one. I have a few ideas for the next project, but prefer not to reveal them just yet...

New York Comic Con 2012

Fri, Oct 12 2012 23:06:49 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The New York Comic Con 2012 is under way now in Manhattan, where over 115,000 people get to meet their favorite authors, artists and designers, along with cosplayers and stars. The show started today and brought the usual assortments of news in the comics scene, along with long lines of fans recreating their favorite characters.

This is the seventh year that NYCC is in operation, and the crowd seemed as enthusiastic as always. Cosplay galleries are appearing online, while live blogs keep track of the action from the ground floor.

Some of the news coming out of there includes the fact that publisher Legendary Comics is trying to make its mark by signing up two new projects from Guillermo del Toro and Grant Morrison. Writer and producer Vivek Tiwary was there to discuss his forthcoming graphic novel *The Fifth Beatle*. Even *My Little Pony* fans got to see a lot of toys for the franchise, which is surprisingly popular among many adults.

Fans could also see new comics, videos, and games. The new title *Injustice: Gods Among Us* by Warner Bros was on display, and they announced Green Arrow, a new character for the game. Needless to say, day 1 was packed, and the weekend is promising to be filled with action as well.

Artist showcase: Jenni

Fri, Oct 12 2012 13:36:19 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're proud to show off the art of Jenni, a photographer and digital artist from Sweden, who creates art using Poser and Photoshop.

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Jenni Sjöberg 2012

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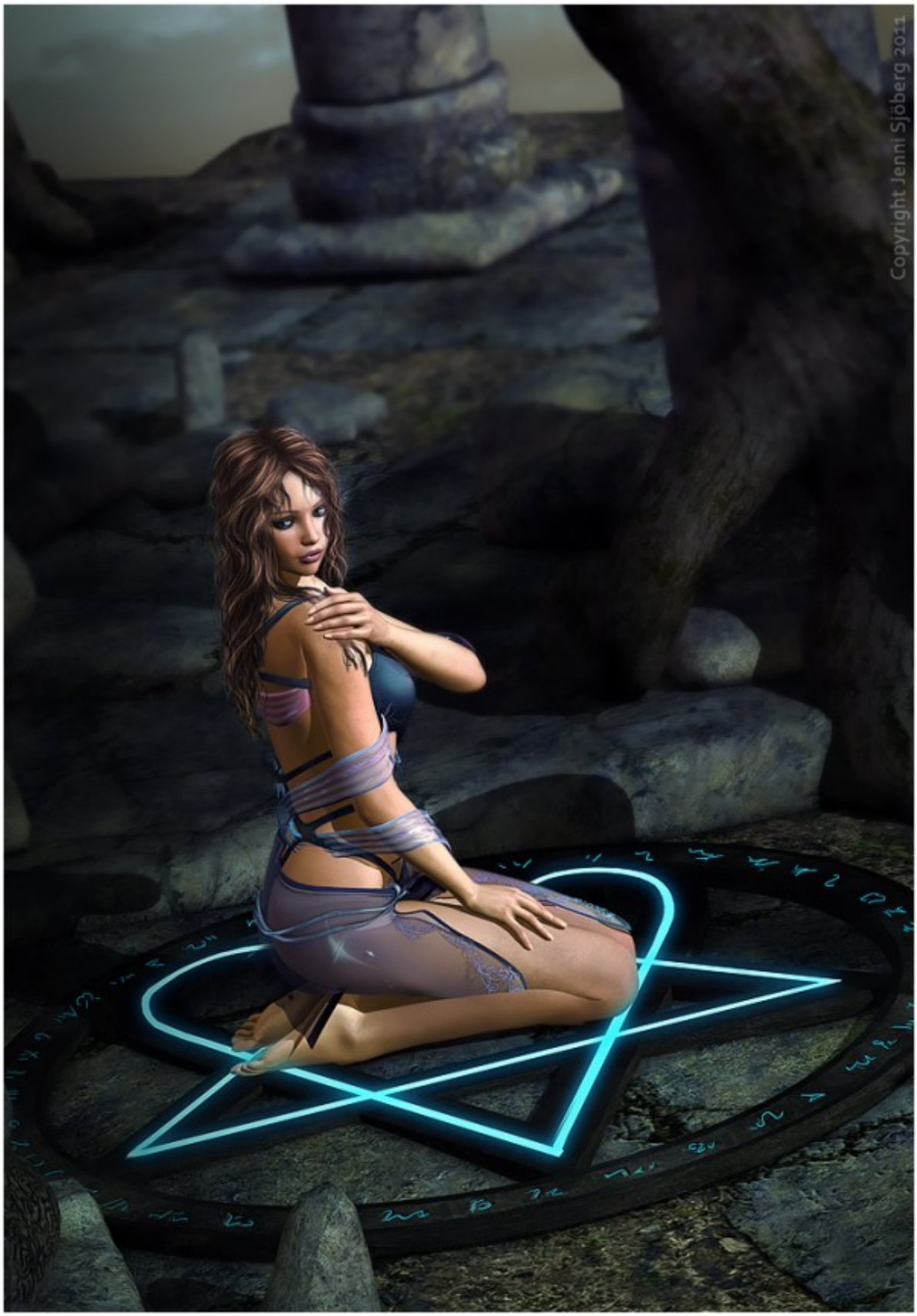


How to make your art go viral

Fri, Oct 12 2012 4:24:31 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Most content creators, whether they be writers, bloggers or artists, want to have their work seen. When you post something to a blog, or an online gallery, it's always nice to have people go to it, see and even

comment on it. After all, many of us entered the art business not for the financial gains, but as a way to express ourselves. So how can you make sure your art, or your expression, gets seen as much as possible? How can you make your post go viral?

Going *'viral'* means that the views of a particular piece suddenly go through the roof, because people keep sharing your link to their friends. Being a good artist doesn't necessarily make you a good marketer, and the first thing to realize is that your success as an artist is highly dependent not only on your art skills, but on your marketing skills as well. There are a lot of people spending all their days trying to figure out how to make things go viral, and there are many varying theories about why a certain YouTube video, article, or image gets millions of views, and another which may look on the surface to be just as good, gets almost no attention.

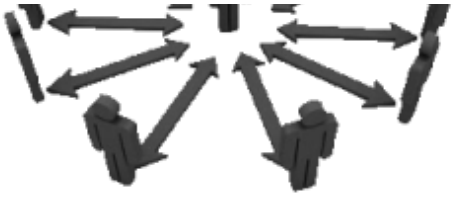
There are many books on the topic, and you could quickly get lost trying to find all the information on Internet marketing, but I'll give you the basic principles, and what anyone can do to maximize the chance of being seen. These are things anyone can do, and which won't cost you much other than time.

First, **make sure to have a good web site**. A lot of people use online galleries like DeviantART or Renderosity to post their images, and you certainly should do that. But your main home on the web should be your own web site, for many reasons. First, you can customize your site to be unique, and to look good. Even if some online galleries allow you some customization, they are always limited in some ways. Also, you never know when a site will close down, and if your gallery is over there, and your signature always points people there, it's a major problem if that goes away. With your own domain name, you are always in control, and you can get your own site at a very low cost these days, often just $5 a month.

Once your content is online, both on your own site and spread around on other gallery sites, as appropriate for your type of content, then it's time to **spread the word on social networks**. You may use Facebook, Twitter, and Google+, or you may not. But you have to realize that many people use these sites. Every time you post some new content, you should let others know by posting on these social sites as well. Also, you should actually go to the sites and post links to your content directly. It's a little known fact that content posted on Facebook through a social plugin gets a lower precedence than something posted directly on your Facebook wall.

So posting your content on the web, and then spreading the word on social sites, really is the most basic thing everyone should do. The fact is, **no one knows for sure whether something will go viral or not.** Studies have shown that quite often, things that marketers plan to go viral flop, and other content which isn't seen as potential viral material ends up being

the talk of the day. A firm recently did an experiment on how photos posted on Facebook go viral, and while it's entertaining to watch the resulting graph, it also shows how chaotic it is. With that said however, there are still things you can keep in mind to help the process along, and increase your chances.



The time of day you post your content is an important factor on how many people will see it. Surveys show that there's three times of the day when people tend to look at Internet content, especially their Facebook walls or other recreational content. There's early in the morning, around noon, and around 6PM. The reason is simple, most people work in 9 to 5 jobs. That means they get a lunch break in the middle, and they are also tempted to browse the web before and after work. So posting your content just before those times will actually increase your viewer count.

Another important thing to keep in mind is that each viewer has a very different value in terms of how likely they will help get your content to go viral. There's no question that if a popular figure, someone who has millions of Twitter or Facebook followers, sees your content and then shares it, then you will get a big influx of viewers. That's why many marketers go out of their ways to **share content directly with influential figures.** Of course you can't start spamming people because that's a quick way to be ignored. But if you think about it, most real world galleries invite influential personalities all the time, for openings or other events, and these people help tremendously with sales. The same thing is true online, and sending a personalized email to someone you know might be interested in the kind of work you do can go a long way.

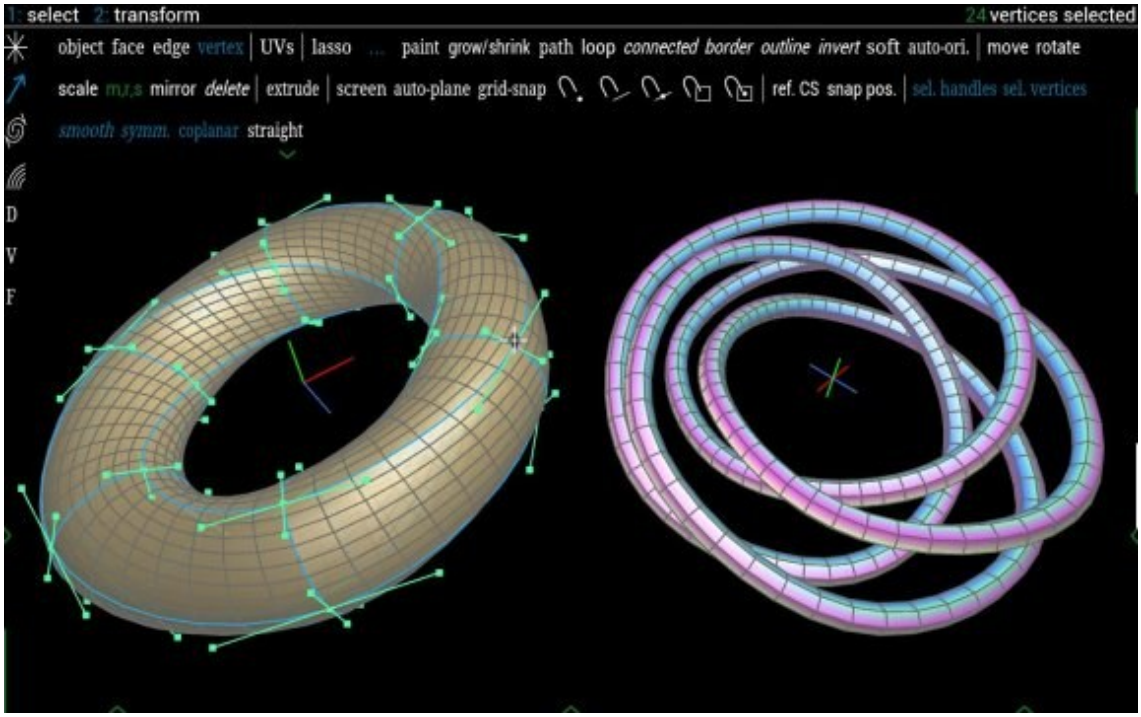
A very important thing to keep in mind is that what works for one person may not work for someone else. **You need to keep experimenting** with Internet marketing, just like you may already be experimenting with art styles. You most likely won't find the perfect method right away, and if you don't iterate quickly and try other things, you may not get the results you need. Most of us have to pay our bills and while making art can be a passion, it also often has to be financially worth it as well. So by becoming a good marketer, and finding out what works for you in order to get views, it will help you keep that passion going.

Finally, when all is said and done, the most important criteria as to whether or not your content will go viral is the quality. **Having good content is the number one way for it to go viral.** It's no guarantee, of course, and it might be disheartening to see other people produce what some may consider lesser content and get a lot more viewers, but in the long run, producing high quality content is the most likely way to win.

Spacedraw for Android launched

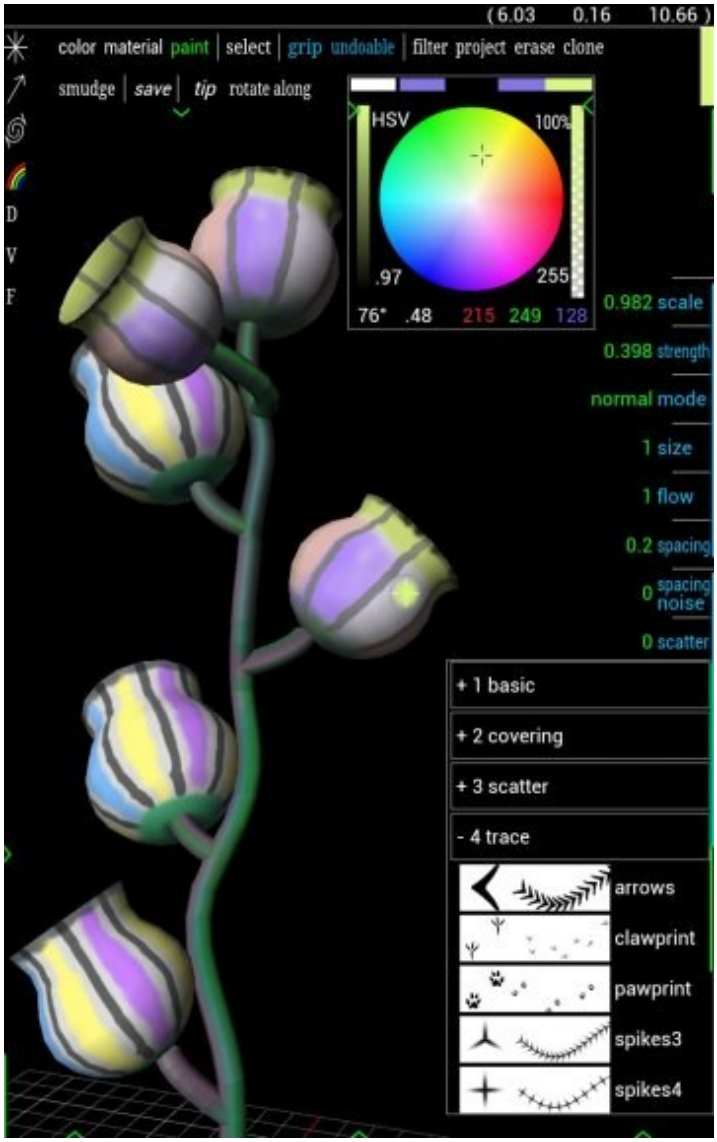
Thu, Oct 11 2012 22:14:57 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

A new 3D modeling software has appeared on the Google Play store called Spacedraw, created by Scalisoft and packing quite a few features, allowing users to create full 3D models on their phones and tablets.



Some of the features include a new UI designed for Android devices, the ability to use touch and multi-touch in order to drive the app, it adapts to screen sizes allowing you to run it on most Android systems, and the company says it's aiming at both professional modelers and beginners as well.

The tools that can be found inside of Spacedraw allow users to create lines, curves, primitives, do patch and polygon modeling, handle lighting, textures and materials. It also provides 3D painting for your models.



The free version allows you to use the application fully, but disables the undo function, and restricts models to 1,000 vertices. An unlock key can be bought for $4.99. So far, the user reviews on the Play store seem mixed, with some people commenting that the interface can be hard to understand. This isn't the first modeling software available on Android, with apps like Sketcher 3D already available. Still, if you like to create 3D on the go, this is certainly worth trying out.

Making of Sayonara

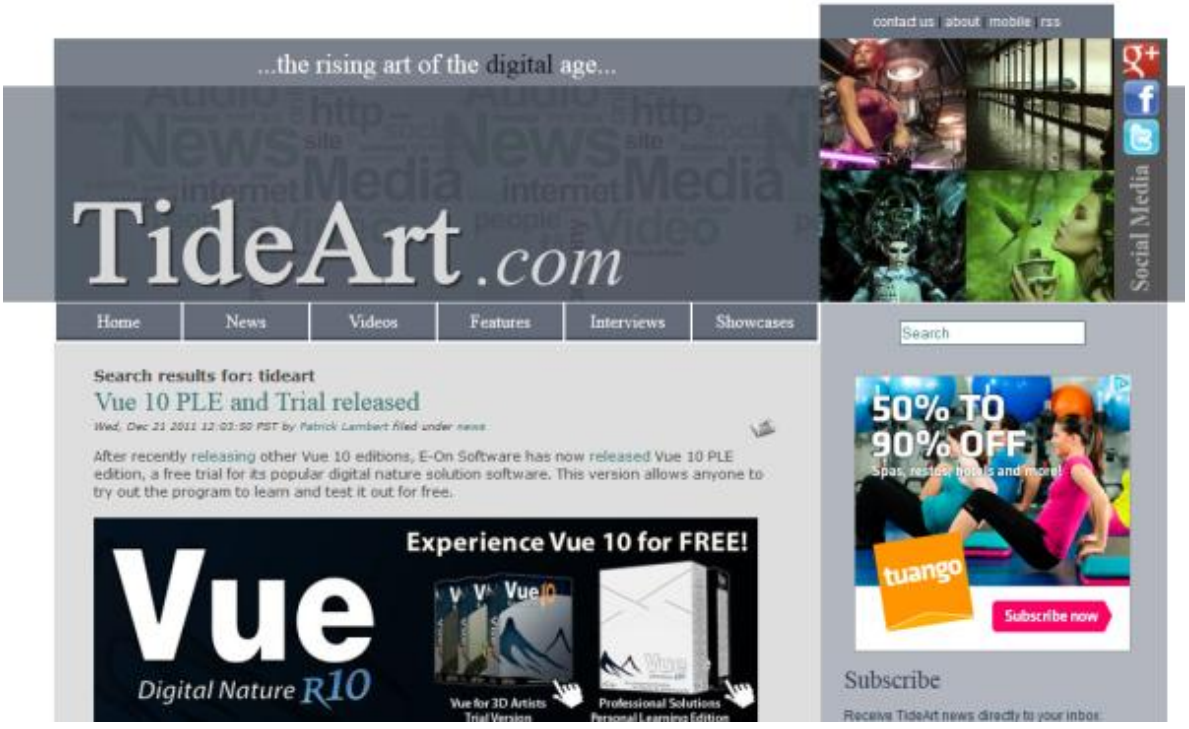
Thu, Oct 11 2012 21:49:48 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this 5 minutes video, the team behind Sayonara shows off some of the behind the scenes production work that went into this project. Using everything from sketches, real world photography, tools like Microsoft Photosynth and Meshlab, they made a very interesting short CGI film.

TideArt is back in action

Thu, Oct 11 2012 21:15:22 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Greetings all, this is Patrick Lambert, the Managing Editor of TideArt, and I'm very pleased to announce that TideArt is back in action. What does that mean exactly? TideArt was launched in the summer of 2011 to cover the online world of art, every day. On this site you were able to find news, tutorials, features, interviews, showcases, behind the scenes videos, basically everything you want to know about people making digital art, 2D, 3D, VFX and mixed media.



Unfortunately, last winter the site was brought to a halt due to a lack of funding. But now, we're back in action!

Here are some of the changes and improvements you can expect to find on the site in the coming weeks and months:

* First, we have a great group of people following the news and happenings in the world of art, ready to share with you everything that's going on, whether it be new 3D software programs, interesting interviews with artists, or showcases.

* Then, the site's back-end has been redesigned so that items can be more easily posted to the home page, allowing us to update you in real time, without the need for expensive server hardware or hosting solutions.

* Finally, we have several projects in the works to help finance the site going forward, along with new projects that will hopefully be helpful for fans of digital art. In the mean time, if you have ideas for features, or suggestions for things you want to see on the site, leave a comment below.

So stay tuned, follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Google+, and happy reading!

Photoshop Touch review

Wed, Feb 29 2012 20:48:42 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

After releasing Photoshop Touch for Android last autumn, a tablet version of the most popular photo retouching software out there, Adobe just released the iPad 2 version for iOS. In one word, it's incredible. While the company had mobile software available before, such as Photoshop Express, this is clearly a completely redesigned software that's made for touch, with large buttons, an interface that fully adapts to the iPad, and some impressive functions.

The first thing you notice when you launch Photoshop Touch is how the software leaves a lot of room for your image in the center of the screen. Every function can be accessed from one of the buttons on the sides of the screen. And there's a lot of functions, everything from brightness, contrast, levels, curves, selection tools, clone stamp, blur, and many filters. There's 25 photo filters that can be added at the touch of a button, and the software allows up to 16 layers.

Another interesting part is that Photoshop Touch is clearly intended to be a cloud solution. Along with your local images on your camera rolls, you can load and save images directly from the Adobe cloud, Facebook and Google. By taking advantage of that cloud service, you could start a project on the iPad, and finish it on your desktop, without having to manually transfer files. And while the workflow on a tablet is fairly different from what you're used to on the desktop version, Photoshop Touch comes with many comprehensive tutorials that walks you through the various functions.

It's clear that this app won't replace Photoshop CS5 for any serious user, since there are many advanced features missing, and the limit of 16 layers and 1600x1600 resolution can be a drawback. However, at $9.99, it's certainly worth checking out if you have an iPad 2 and are interested in this type of image manipulation.

Check out Adobe's preview video here:

Diablo III book illustration

Mon, Jan 2 2012 20:04:48 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Artist James Gurney creates an illustration for the book **Diablo III: Book of Cain** for Blizzard.

HDR Light Studio 3 released

Sun, Jan 1 2012 20:57:03 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

HDR Light Studio is a program that allows HDR lighting to be used to provide a new way of lighting up 3D models. The latest version, 3.0, has been released. Among the new features you can find the addition of localized exposure, color and saturation tools using new light blending modes, custom fall-off curves, a new color system for lighting artists and Collada support.

hdrlightstudio 3

Making a realistic cocktail in Photoshop

Fri, Dec 30 2011 20:32:55 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Alexandra Fomicheva over at PSDtuts posted an interesting tutorial showing how to create a realistic looking 3D cocktail glass using Photoshop. The article goes in depth on how to make the glass and every part of it using the program's filters and 3D capabilities.

ZBrush FiberMesh announced

Fri, Dec 30 2011 20:27:20 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The developers of ZBrush have announced that the next version, originally planned for December, will be released on January 23, and include new features such as FiberMesh. Thanks to FiberMesh, ZBrush users will be able to create realistic hair and fibers as fully sculptable objects. The density will be able to span several millions polygons, and be exportable like any other creation in the program.

Interview with CG Trader

Thu, Dec 29 2011 21:41:11 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Marius Kalytis from CG Trader, a new online marketplace for 3D models.

cgtrader
fair 3D marketplace

Could you briefly describe yourself?

My name is Marius Kalytis. When I was 16 I found a passion for 3D graphics and been deep into it since then. Although my graduation is financial mathematics, I worked as a web programmer, 3D and post production designer in many fields, like game development, TV commercials and architecture visualization. In 2005 I founded a 3D visualization and animation company called Visual Mind. Later a partnership was established between me and Donatas Aksomitas, who is a shareholder of AGA-CAD company. Together we came up with a new business model that helps artists trade CG content. Going through many transformations, CGTrader became a unique solution and an alternative for other 3D online shops.

What is CGTrader and what was your goal behind it?

CGTrader is a platform where 3D designers can buy and sell 3D models. It does not act as middleman but more like a marketplace where every artist has his own shop. It's like Ebay but for 3D designers.

We have several goals in mind. First, we want to expand the 3D stock market. To do this, we have to make better conditions for artists and motivate them to publish high quality models online. We believe that giving maximum returns to artists is the best way to do this.

We also want to make an opportunity for 3D artists to become professional sellers and make it possible to make a living solely from online selling. I see a lot of benefits in selling 3D models as compared to freelancing. You don't have tight deadlines and the stress that comes with it. The only problem is that due to large commissions, selling 3D models is less profitable than freelancing. The problem of low returns creates a harmful loop between sellers and customers. The sellers don't get enough incentives to work on quality and customers can't find wide selections of high quality 3D models for a good price. It hinders demand in the market and subsequently the supply.

How does this site compare with other similar sites like ShareCG and TurboSquid?

CGTrader is different in many ways compared to other 3D shops. First of all, we don't take commission percentages, but use a peer-to-peer system that enables authors to get 100% of the sale directly from customers. This solves many issues that arise when selling through middlemen. The biggest advantage is of course that for even average priced models, artists get twice and sometimes even triple as much as they

would get if the model were sold on Turbosquid. And the higher is the price, the more profitable it gets to sell on CGTrader. This peer-to-peer model brings benefits for both parties: artists get better returns thus can lower the price and get more sales and customers get lower prices for the same quality.

It eliminates the problem known as undercutting, where competing sellers start to lower the prices close to a few dollars. On CGTrader it is illogical to lower the price below $5, because then you would get nothing.

Further, the artists don't have to wait a whole month for payment, because they get the money instantly after the purchase has been made. It also bypasses the illogical IRS 30% tax that many artists are obliged to pay on top of what is left after the commissions are taken.

You put an emphasis on the peer to peer model, how does that work exactly?

The idea is very simple:

Publish a 3D model on CGTrader for free.

On a sale, get 100% from the buyer directly to your Paypal account.

After the sale, pay an activation fee to put the product back on sale.

Depending on the turnover rate of a particular 3D model, artists can choose the most appropriate type of activation:

One-time activation: $5 (activate product until the next sale)

Annual activation: $20 (activate product for one year term, since the activation moment)

This model is very effective and risk-free, because once you sold an object, you already have the money needed to pay for activation. Secondly, the sale means that your model has value, so it is worth it to activate it as a valuable product that will likely generate royalties in the future.

This seems to offer a very good deal as far as payment goes, what's your business plan for the site?

Our business model adhere to LEAN principles. The core idea is to maximize customer value while minimizing waste. By minimizing unnecessary costs we can give more value to the content creators and still be able to do business. For example, middlemen are bound to have bloated customer support to deal with all product issues they resell. We believe sellers should have the right to choose whether they can handle it by themselves or someone else. And there's no doubt that the author, who knows his 3D model inside out, can solve product related issues far better than anyone else. For those who don't want to deal with customers but rather concentrate on modeling, we will offer a service to handle customer support for them. The difference is that on CGTrader authors can choose whether they want to make maximum returns by doing business themselves or outsource some work to us.

In the near future we are going to introduce other services to supplement our income. For example product publishing service for those who don't want to spend time on boring publishing processes. There are many more ideas which will be revealed in the future.

CGTrader has been in beta for some time, is anything different now that it's no longer in beta?

The beta period was basically needed to test transaction processes, fix major bugs and assure our security requirements. We understand that many professional sellers are cautious about uploading their valuable libraries to new shops. They want to be sure that the system is secure and the business behind it is well-established. After almost a year, we are happy to announce that we have reached these objectives. Now we can state with certainty that the system is stable and secure. At the moment we are negotiating with several investors about expanding our business and making it even more compelling to our users.

Around how many models do you have, and do you have plans to carry other items, like textures, scripts or plugins?

At the moment we have around 1600 models and the growth is accelerating. Our goal is to build a strong community and a large enough library so that customers can easily find a wide selection of what they are looking for. The sooner we grow this place, the sooner authors will be able to earn royalties they deserve.

Yes, we plan to make this the platform where artists can trade various assets, not just 3D models, hence the title is CG Trader. We already implemented Revit models and in the near future we are going to add new types of products like textures, plugins and tutorials.

How has user feedback been during the beta process?

Its been great! We were happy to get instant attention from many professional sellers, which helped to track bugs and suggested many useful features. I would like to thank all the members who dedicated their time and helped to build this platform! Without them we wouldn't be able to succeed.

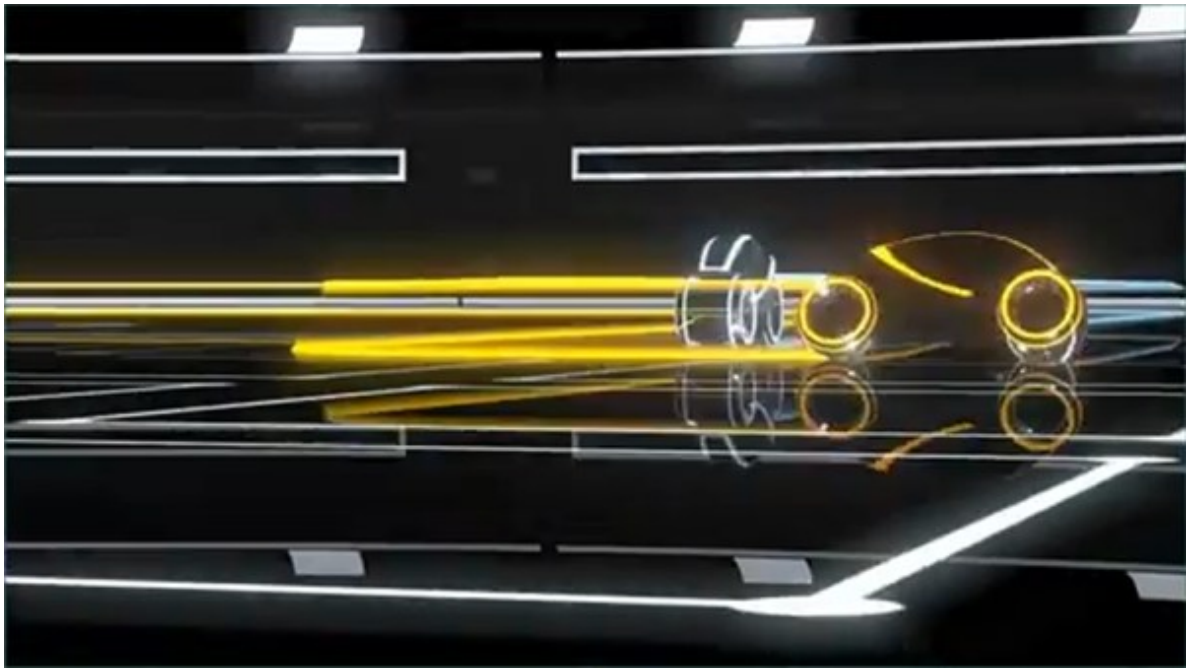
Do you have any feature in the work that you can talk about?

Recently we developed the Revit browser that lets users sell 3D models directly from Revit. We are also working on the new publisher, that will make the publishing process easy and fast. It will have a brand new interface and innovative tools for writing tags and descriptions. We are working on final touches and will integrate it in coming days.

Tron lighting effects tutorial

Thu, Dec 29 2011 21:09:13 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

CGRecord spotted a series of video tutorials on how to create Tron style lights and vehicles in 3DS MAX. The 9 videos go in details on how to make the models and light them up properly for the animation.



BF3 ad behind the scenes

Thu, Dec 29 2011 21:04:05 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The team behind the Freedie Wong videos made a 30 seconds VFX commercial for Battlefield 3, and show off how they accomplished it inside of 10 days.

Artist showcase: darkermusings

Wed, Dec 28 2011 20:19:30 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we feature the great 3D art of Melissa Krauss, also known as darkermusings, an artist from the US.

Art by Mel

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Art by M. C. Krauss
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Art by Me

© 2008
Art by M. C. Krause
www.darkermusings.net

Art by Mel
©2011 M. C. Knight

Animating robot LED lights

Tue, Dec 27 2011 20:11:14 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Today Mile Eror posted a video tutorial showing us how to create robot like LED lights that change following a speech pattern animation. In this video, he shows how to create the fake LED lights and how to animate them so they look like they're moving according to the script using 3DS MAX and After Effects.

Making a car model in 3DS MAX tutorial

Mon, Dec 26 2011 20:19:19 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Over at CGArena, Jomar Machado posted a tutorial showing how he created a red Bugatti car using sketch references in 3DS MAX. Following the lines carefully, he creates the whole car model from simple 2D drawings.

RayFire dead objects feature video

Mon, Dec 26 2011 20:15:12 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Mir Vadim posted a video showcasing the dead objects feature of RayFire 1.57, a 3DS MAX plugin made to break up objects in a realistic way, creating fragments and demolition scenes.

Unity 3.5 beta released

Mon, Dec 26 2011 20:11:31 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Unity, a popular game development engine, just released its 3.5 beta preview version. This time-limited release is available now to try out, and includes several new features, including the Shuriken particle system, built-in pathfinding, occlusion culling and LOD, native Google Chrome deployment, linear space lighting, HDR, and more.

The Hobbit production video 5

Mon, Dec 26 2011 20:03:39 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Peter Jackson resumed posting production videos from the set of **The Hobbit**. In this one, he talks about the challenges of filming on location, and moving such a large production crew.

Artist showcase: Ruskul

Sun, Dec 25 2011 20:55:05 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we feature the art of Ruskul, a CSU graduate and part time concept artist.

ruskul.deviantart.com
Jan 2007

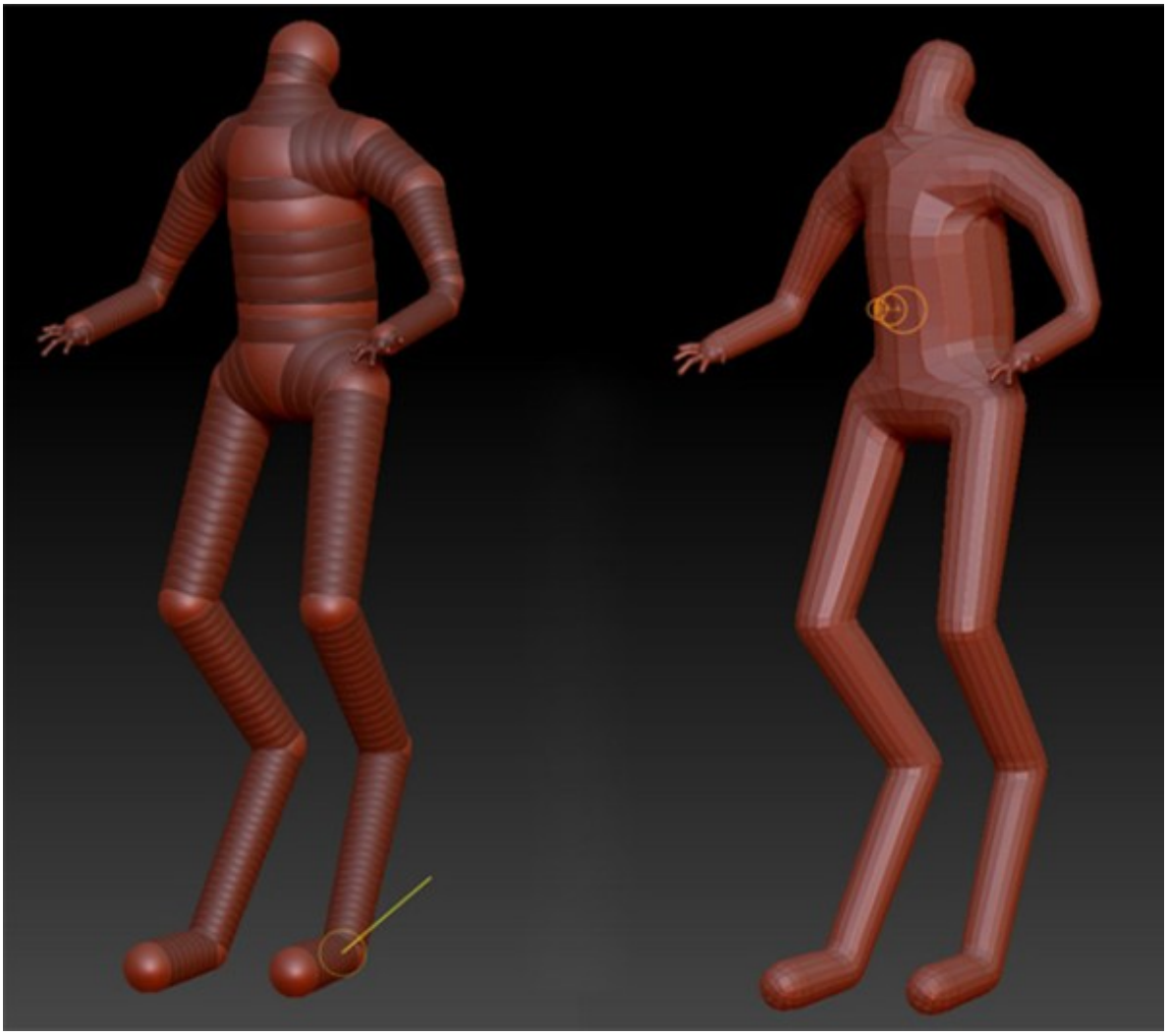
Ruskul
Nov/09

ruskul.deviantart.com
Mar - 2007

ZSpheres tutorial

Fri, Dec 23 2011 21:39:13 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Arnab posted a short tutorial over on CGTuts on how to create figures using ZSphere in ZBrush 4. In 20 steps, he shows us how to go from simple spheres to a realistic character.



OctaneRender for 3DS MAX

Thu, Dec 22 2011 19:16:40 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

OctaneRender, a popular stand alone renderer, has released its very first version for 3DS MAX. The plugin is a bridge between 3DS MAX and the stand alone version, and requires it to be installed. With this, you can access all the functionality of OctaneRender from within the modeling application. This new version is compatible with 3DS MAX 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Rendering a toy car using V-Ray

Wed, Dec 21 2011 20:07:40 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Hani Mohammadi posted a video tutorial over at CGArena on how to create the proper shaders and render a toy car using V-Ray. The hour long presentation doesn't address modeling itself but talks about various shading techniques and the rendering process using the V-Ray renderer.

Vue 10 PLE and Trial released

Wed, Dec 21 2011 20:03:50 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

After recently releasing other Vue 10 editions, E-On Software has now released Vue 10 PLE edition, a free trial for its popular digital nature solution software. This version allows anyone to try out the program to learn and test it out for free.

Surface splash video tutorial

Wed, Dec 21 2011 19:58:57 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Hristo Velev posted a video tutorial on how to create surface splash using Thinking Particles, showing how to create the particles and have them act in a natural way.

Artist showcase: Kurt Lundqvist

Tue, Dec 20 2011 19:29:06 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature the art work of Kurt Lundqvist, a digital artist who mixes 2D and 3D to make great images.

KURT LUNDQVIST

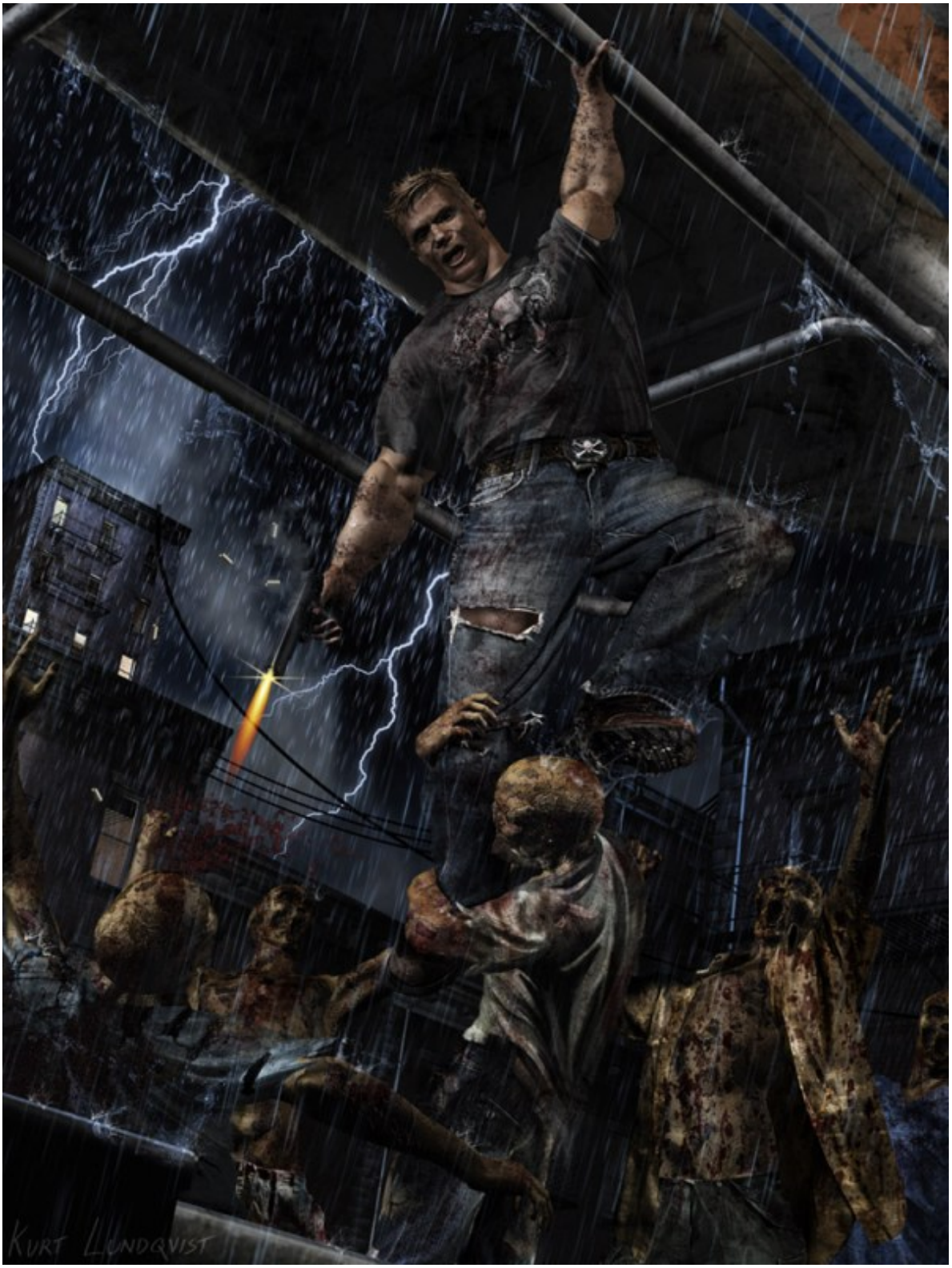
ARMY
KURT LUNDQVIST

HIRE
STILWELL & PALMER
Your life might depend upon it!

KURT LUNDQVIST

Kurt Lundqvist

KURT LUNDQVIST



Flock of birds animation in 3DS MAX

Tue, Dec 20 2011 1:57:17 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Chandan Kumar posted an interesting tutorial on how to create an animation of a bird flock in 3DS MAX. In two videos, he explains how to create the birds, setup the animation, and get the final video out.

V-Ray 2.0 update released

Tue, Dec 20 2011 1:52:11 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The Chaos Group released the latest update version of V-Ray 2 for 3DS MAX. Among the new features include enhanced RT GPU capabilities, a new shader for hair rendering, native V-Ray hair support, and more. This release is available for purchase at $1350, and you can get the upgrade price if you're currently on version 1.5 for $550.

Making of an Ibaloy Warrior

Tue, Dec 20 2011 1:42:41 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Ferdinand D. Ladera has posted an interesting tutorial showing how he created the image **Ibaloy Warrior** using photo references and custom brushes.

Artist showcase: Giovani Luengo

Sat, Dec 17 2011 18:55:56 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're happy to feature the art of Giovani Luengo, a digital artist from Brazil.

Giovani Luengo

Giovani Luengo

Giovani Luengo

Giovani Luengo

Giovani Luengo

Giovani Luengo

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy VFX breakdown

Fri, Dec 16 2011 17:14:11 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The VFX director behind **Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy** posted an interesting VFX breakdown video of the shots, along with some very good music.

Underwater Cinema 4D video tutorial

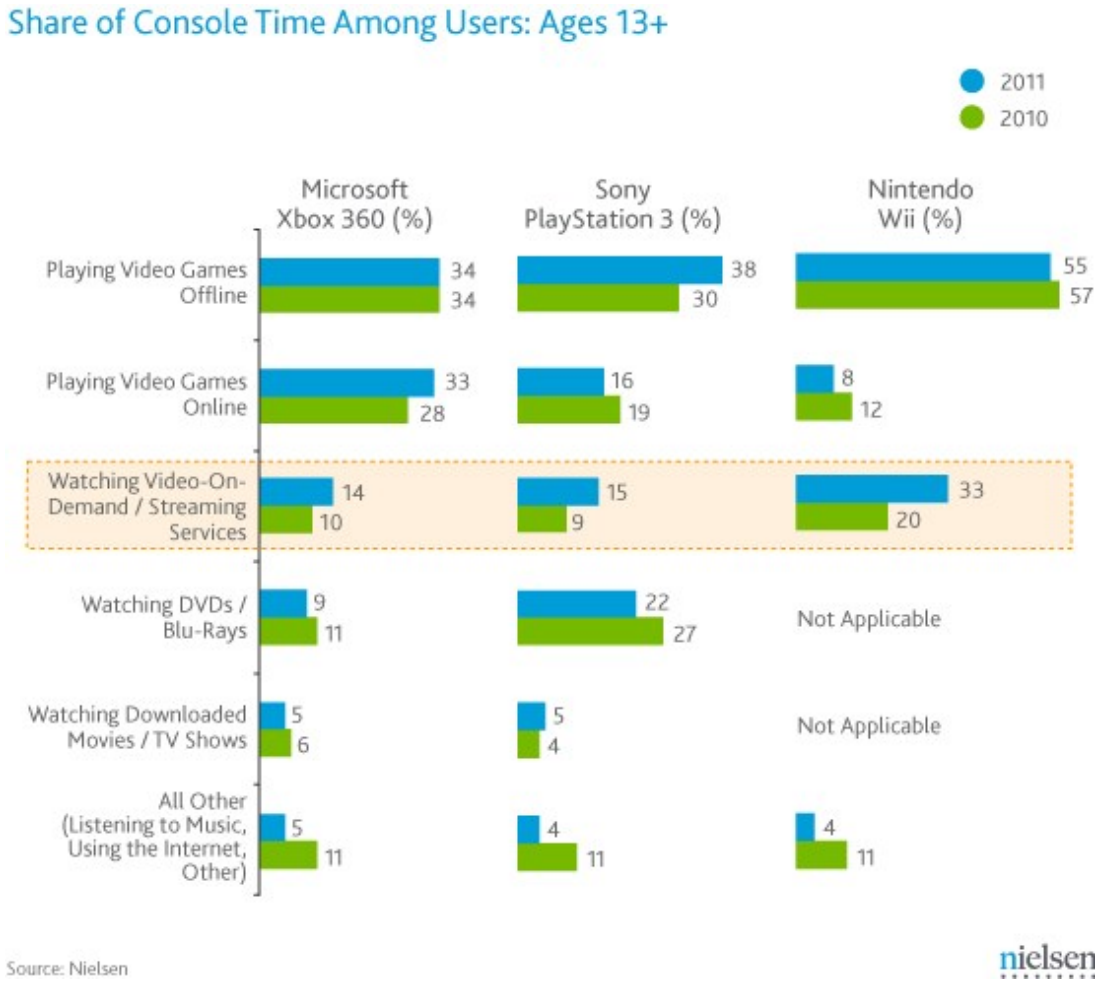
Fri, Dec 16 2011 17:06:19 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Daniel Menapace posted an interesting video tutorial talking about making an undersea scene in Cinema 4D.

Nielsen stats on video streaming to game consoles

Fri, Dec 16 2011 17:02:47 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

In what is sure to be an unsurprising result, Nielsen released its 2011 stats on video streaming to game consoles, and the results show a rise from last year. As more digital services become available, it seems gamers start watching more video as well. 14% of the time spent on consoles was used to stream video from Netflix, Hulu, and others, compared with 10% last year.



Interview with iDevCam

Thu, Dec 15 2011 18:06:00 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with the creator of iDevCam, an iOS app that allows you to control 3DS MAX from your device.

Could you briefly describe yourself?

Hi, my name is Artur Leão, I'm 30 years old and I work as a TD for a post-production house in Portugal. I started out as a programmer in Pascal and Clipper and after some years working on Autocad and Solidworks I decided I wanted to work in the movies! So I was introduced to 3dsmax and here I am

What is iDevCam and what are some of its features?

iDevCam is an iOS app that allows 3dsMax users to interactively move and rotate the camera just by holding their device. This was my very first attempt to let users have some kind of system as we saw in the latest feature films like Avatar and Rango, with it's limitations for sure but in terms of pricing and availability it's a must have.

Why would someone want to use this as opposed to the traditional mouse and keyboard?

Well, as I've mentioned before, using iDevCam gives you a real camera effect such as handheld camera, also it allows for a director or anyone for that matter to work in realtime in a 3D scene, with no need to have knowledge in moving 3D cameras or rotating them. The natural movement created by iDevCam will always be much more real than using the mouse, keyboard, noise controllers, etc.

You've recently released version 1.5, what are the biggest new features?

One of the features that for me was kind of a surprise because I first implemented it to be just a debug and ended up in the final app is the Playback Control, as this may seem something very simple it also is very handy. It takes iDevCam to another level, where it can be used for presentations for example, you can open your Max file, fire up iDevCam and just press play, stop, rewind, play again! Imagine this when you're doing a presentation or a workshop, you will be the cool guy at the party!

Other two very important features that were added was the fact that you now have two additional filters to the raw movement already present in v1.0. Both these filters smooth out the movement of the camera, great to create fly-bys, dolly/crane movements, etc.

Last but not least is the ability to now transform the camera in all axes, not only on XY.

Right now iDevCam is only for 3DS MAX, do you plan to expend that control scheme to other programs?

Well..... noyes. Was that clear? I'll explain, I'm more comfortable working in 3dsMax since it's my software of choice to work with, so doing it for another program would involve me learning new coding skills and I really find it hard to do that in a timely manner. For now I prefer to focus on iDevCam in 3dsMax and we'll see about the future... You might first see an Android version rather than iDevCam for Maya for example but don't quote me on that.

How hard was it to create this app, and how much time did it take you?

That is a good question, you know, I never coded for iOS or anything Mac, so this was a shot in the dark that went very well, I started learning the basics with the free developer account from Apple but I soon realized that I was going to need the full account to start coding and debugging on my iDevice, so I took a leap of faith and everything went well. The tricky part was that I needed to develop on iOS and at the same time write it's counterpart in Maxscript so I could get the data from the iDevice to Max, it took me about a month from knowing nothing about iOS to have the app released in the App Store.

Are you working on any other apps for iOS?

Hands on? No, on the table? Yes and all I can say is it will be a joint venture and again related to the VFX community.

How's the user feedback been so far?

The feedback has been great, a lot of people e-mailed me with suggestions and feature requests. I was totally blown away with this. I was even more surprised when some people who work in the movie industry emailed me saying they loved the app, so I hope someday in a near future to see some shots done using iDevCam to record the camera! I thank to everyone who bought the app. THANK YOU!!!

Any new feature coming to the app that you can talk about?

For sure and nothing better than the features that have been requested by users, who better than the people who are using the app, right? Keep in mind that these features will be in a free update also. Here's some I have on my wishlist but I don't promise all of them will make it to release:

- Clear keys for specific tracks (Move, Rotate)
- Reduce keys after recording (filtering the animation based on a threshold)

- Offline recording to an CSV file for later use.

What makes games worth playing

Wed, Dec 14 2011 18:13:26 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Badgeville's Tony Ventrice wrote an interesting piece on Gamasutra about what makes video games fun, and how to design for your public. This is a must read for any game designer out there.

Blender 2.61 released

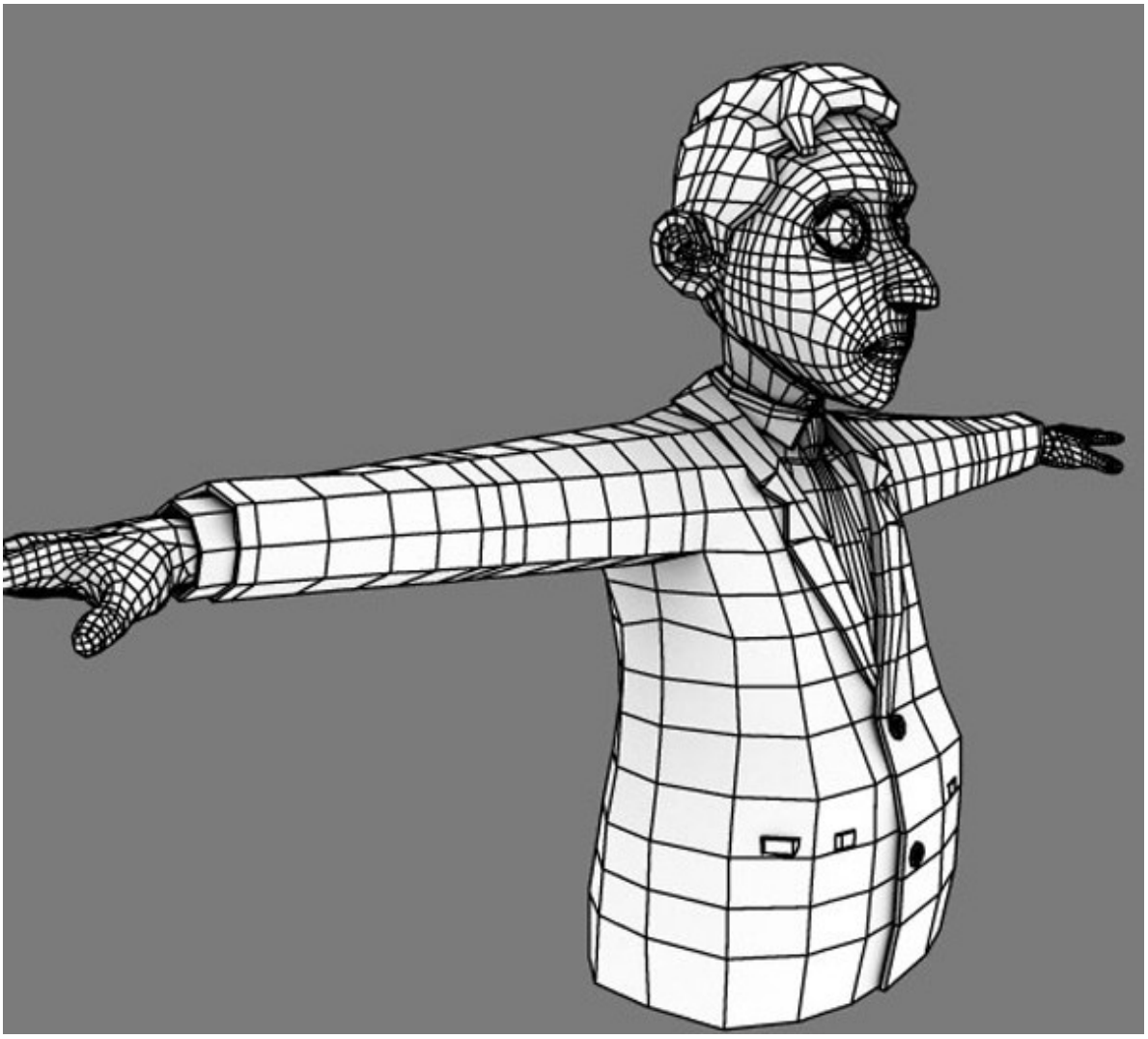
Wed, Dec 14 2011 18:10:10 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Blender 2.61 was released today. This open source modeling software has been improved once again with a series of new features and bug fixes. Among them we find motion tracking, the Cycles engine, dynamic paint, an ocean simulator, and various improved tools.

Rendering wireframes in Maya

Tue, Dec 13 2011 11:32:50 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Ranjit Singh Rana posted an interesting tutorial on how to render wireframes in Maya. It may seem simple, but wireframes are used in the viewports, and getting them to render in a nice way can get tricky. These 27 steps will show you how.



Artist showcase: John GoldenWolf

Tue, Dec 13 2011 11:26:21 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature the art of John GoldenWolf, a Star Wars fan and digital artist from Texas.

WOLF
19/11/11

WOLF

WOLF
11/30/11

WOLF
3/23/11

WOLF
9/9/10

Creating a flying paper animation in 3DS MAX

Mon, Dec 12 2011 17:41:50 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Cristian Pop posted a 57 steps tutorial on how to create a flying paper animation by using 3DS MAX and Thinking Particles.

Converting 2D footage into Stereoscopic 3D

Mon, Dec 12 2011 17:37:31 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Nick Manning, Business Development Manager at Autodesk, explains how to turn 2D footage into Stereoscopic 3D (S3D) using various tools in an interesting article on the subject. He describes some of the challenges encountered, and what the workflow looks like.

Making of Fez

Mon, Dec 12 2011 17:30:01 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Gamasutra has an interesting interview about **Fez**, an XBOX Live indie arcade title. In it, Phil Fish talks about the 5 years they spent developing it, the challenges they faced, and how difficult the experience ended up being for him. A worthy read for any independent game developer out there.

MegaUpload versus Hollywood

Mon, Dec 12 2011 17:23:07 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

A very controversial topic has started blowing up over the weekend, when the site MegaUpload organized a

video featuring a large quantity of well known artists, in order to promote their site and go against RIAA assertions that the site is nothing but piracy content. But then, in the ultimate irony, Universal filed DMCA notices, and continuously asked YouTube to take the video down, even though they owned none of the content in the video.

Now, MegaUpload is sueing, and the news is going around the world, of how large corporations claim they want even more control over how the Internet works, through laws like SOPA and Protect-IP, in order to punish pirates, yet misuse the tools they currently have. The Guardian has a nice editorial about the whole story, and how the real pirates are those large Hollywood companies.

YouTube for Schools

Mon, Dec 12 2011 17:09:34 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

YouTube launched a new project today called **YouTube for Schools**, aimed at the education market. Here's a video that explains the new system.

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zSpace video

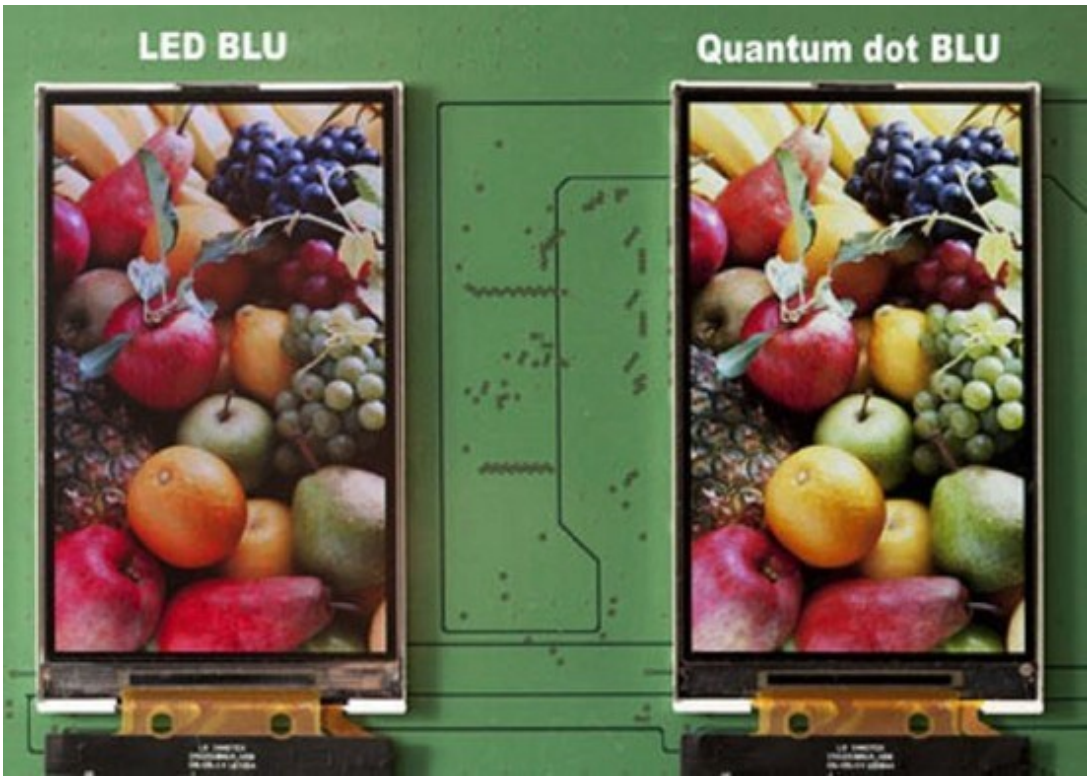
Sun, Dec 11 2011 22:17:47 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

A fairly cryptic video has appeared about zSpace, a new control scheme the company calls a virtual-holographic experience.

Quantum Dots TVs

Sun, Dec 11 2011 20:57:48 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

While 3D TVs are still trying to become mainstream, and manufacturers are heavily pushing them into people's homes, now a new technology called QD TV is set to revolutionize the world of televisions once again. The Telegraph reports that Quantum Dots technology can produce a new type of display that uses tiny crystals to show pixels, and can be printed on folding plastic sheets. This means thinner screens, and even displays that can be rolled up.



The technology is being developed by scientists at Manchester University, and they are already in contact with manufacturers. They expect to have the new thin screens being produced within a year. The new crystals used in QD displays also produce better color accuracy and range, and are cheaper to make. The

scientists predict that the quality of these upcoming TVs will be far superior to current LCD TVs.

Just last year, LG was the first to commercialize QD technology as part of smaller displays, now it's just a matter of adapting it to large screens. It's believed that many major electronics makers are hard at work to get the new displays fabricated, and they should appear on our shelves by 2013.

VGA 2011 cinematics

Sun, Dec 11 2011 20:33:48 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

For gamers, the Video Game Awards (VGA) is always a time when a lot of new cinematic trailers get released. This year is no different, and VGA 2011 was the site of various new trailers showing great 3D and special effects.

Diablo 3 opening cinematic

Transformers: Fall of Cybertron trailer

Metal Gear Solid: Rising trailer

Fortnite teaser

Mass Effect 3 gameplay trailer

BioShock Infinite trailer

Rainbow Six: Patriots trailer

Command and Conquer Generals 2 trailer

Tekken Tag Tournament 2 teaser

Artist showcase: Omri Koresh

Sun, Dec 11 2011 0:36:56 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're happy to showcase the art of Omri Koresh

OMRI
KOBISH

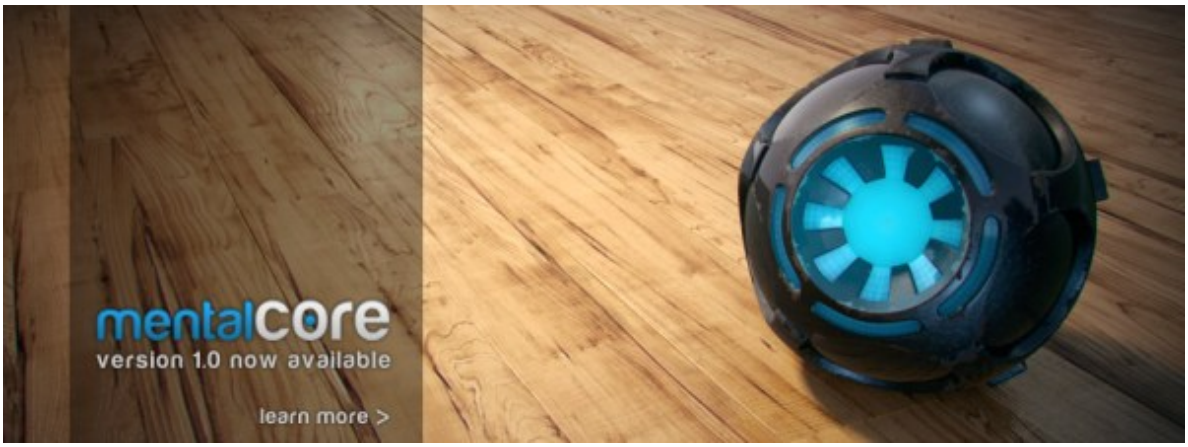
08

Omi 06

Interview with MentalCore

Fri, Dec 9 2011 22:46:54 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Corey Frew, a developer of MentalCore, a plugin providing an alternative to the standard rendering workflow for Maya and Mental Ray.



Could you briefly describe yourself?

My name is Corey Frew. I'm 24 and currently living in Auckland, New Zealand. I have always had an interest in software development from a young age and getting into 3D Animation has been a great way to exercise those skills and develop products such as MentalCore. I started doing artist level lighting and rendering work, so my aim has always been to create software that I would want to use as a artist. I'm currently in the role of Supervising Technical Director at Oktobor Animation, designing and developing the pipeline from assets through to compositing.

What is MentalCore and what are some of its features?

MentalCore is a shading, lighting and rendering plugin for Maya and MentalRay. Its really designed to improve the usage of MentalRay in Maya and allow artists to spend less time trying to figure out technical and implementation issues of MentalRay and more time spent making their work better. One of the key features of MentalCore is its Render Pass System. Its a completely new way for MentalRay users to easily and efficiently create render passes in Maya and be confident in knowing that you will be getting the results

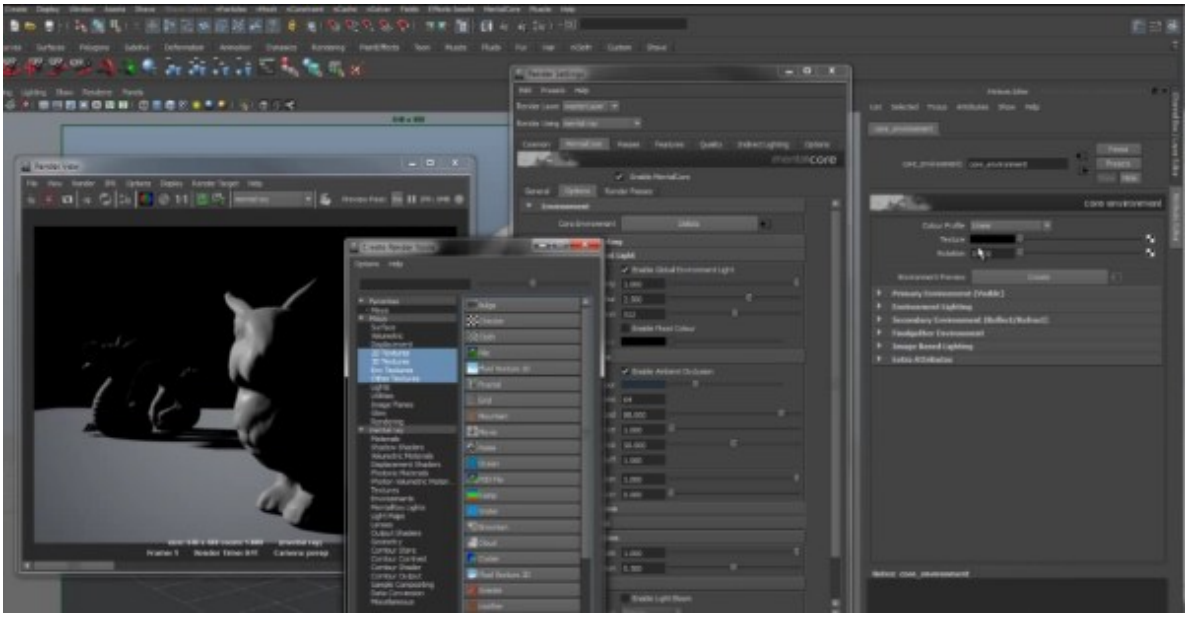
you expect. Another key feature is the Shader Library. MentalCore comes with a large variety of material, texture and utility shaders that can really speed up an artists work and make it easier to achieve the look they want.

Recently you released version 1.0, how much work has gone into making this plugin?

A lot. I have been the sole developer on this project so far, and it started out as a in house tool a couple of years ago. Since then it has gone through many iterations and really turned into a great product that I know I couldn't do without. The official beta was launched late last year, which we had over 1000 testers signed up for, and thanks to their great feedback I feel we now have a really polished result.

MentalCore claims to create great renders in less time, what's the advantage of using it over the normal Maya tools?

Most people that have used MentalRay in Maya would probably agree there's a lot to be desired, both in features and integration. MentalRay is a very capable renderer, but you shouldn't need to be a rendering guru to use it. MentalCore has always been about making MentalRay more user friendly for 3D artists and allowing them to spend more time improving their work instead of fighting technical problems and limitations. With features such as the render pass system, you can know that all render passes work with all MentalCore shaders how you would expect, so there's much less guess work. Ambient Occlusion transparency is also a great example of making a technical problem very easy - a user can just enable this feature and ambient occlusion will obey any transparency maps on objects - you simply can't do this without MentalCore. There's a ton of other features I could mention also, but the key is, the whole system has been well though out from start to finish, and really its a much improved integration of MentalRay for Maya.



How easy to use is this plugin for someone who's relatively new to 3D rendering?

MentalRay by itself can be quite tricky to master for even relatively experienced users. But since MentalCore makes the whole process easier, it would really help a beginner to create great renders with a much smaller learning curve. We have a YouTube channel currently setup with over 15 video tutorials all about MentalCore and how to get started. There's a great ''Getting Started'' tutorial that shows a complete workflow for using the basic features of MentalCore if you've never used it before, or unsure how it works.

Right now it's a plugin for Maya and Mental Ray, will it work on other renderers in the future?

Since anyone who owns a copy of Maya also has MentalRay, it has been our focus for now - its also the renderer of choice for our studio. I think MentalRay would be the renderer that would gain the most out of a product like this, and we currently have no plans to add support for other renderers. However I wouldn't rule out the possibility in the future if there was the need and demand for it.

You ran a year long beta period, what kind of feedback have you received from your testers?

We received a lot of positive feedback about MentalCore and how much it has helped users and improved their experience with MentalRay. We also received tons of ideas for new features and shaders which we have been able to implement the majority of, also a lot of feedback on the render pass system which has really helped us improve it. And of course lots of bugs that have been fixed.

Does the purchase price include any future update to the software?

Yes it will include bug fixes as well minor updates which may include a couple of new features, as well as support for Maya 2013 as soon as it becomes available. We also provide a forum at our website where users can get help and support for the product.

Are you working on any upcoming feature you can tell us about?

We have a few features planned for a future version of MentalCore. One thing I would like to see is improved viewport 2.0 support for MentalCore shaders. Currently most of the materials will show a decent preview of the shader viewport 2, but I would like to see that extended to provide a much more realistic display of all the shaders that would help lighting and shading artists to get some interactive results in the viewport before they even start rendering.

New Intuos4 Wacom tablets

Fri, Dec 9 2011 20:03:18 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Engadget reports about some findings at FCC filings showing new Intuos4 tablets from Wacom. This may be of interest if you've been looking at buying a new drawing tablet, and want to wait for the latest and greatest. No detail is available yet other than the 3 available models.

The design of web site navigation bars

Fri, Dec 9 2011 7:45:00 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Daniel Alves posted an interesting article over at Mashable talking about the design of web site toolbars. In a series of comparisons, he talks about one level versus several level bars, drop downs, and more. A useful read for any designer involved in making web sites.

Artist showcase: Nikita Argunov

Thu, Dec 8 2011 22:56:10 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're happy to feature the art of Nikita Argunov, a VFX artist from Russia.

WL-027

www.planetmo-movie.com

Sony 3D TV ends split-screen gaming

Thu, Dec 8 2011 20:12:52 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

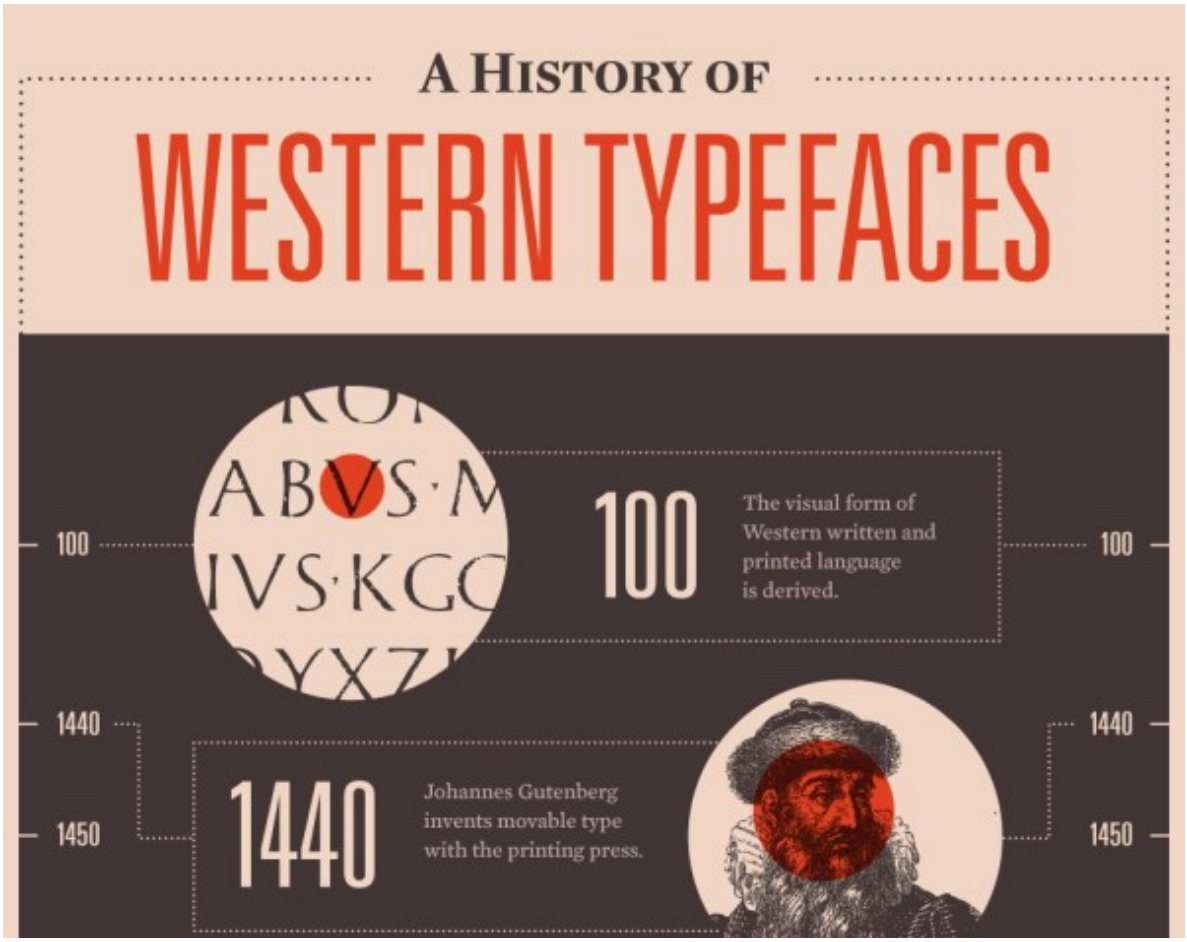
3D TVs are nothing new, and certainly for the Holidays they are being sold everywhere, both in stores and online. But Sony introduced an interesting technology that might be of interest to gamers, using 3D to provide a fairly unique feature. Calling it SimulView, the PlayStation 3D TV allows two players to see different screens from the same display. The two pairs of glasses provided can do true 3D, but if you're playing a multiplayer game, they can instead be setup to broadcast two channels, showing different views to each player.

The 24'' display is available now from Amazon and others for $500. Additional glasses will set you back $70 each. Still, it's an interesting take on 3D technology.

History of western typefaces

Thu, Dec 8 2011 18:53:47 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

For those interested in fonts and the history of writing, Mashable posted an infograph showing the history of western typefaces, with all the major events, leading to the type of font design we know and love to this day.



Modeling a jaw from photo references

Thu, Dec 8 2011 18:48:35 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In thias fairly unusual 25 minutes long video, Lukasz Szeflinski shows us how to use reference photos to model a jaw pair, using 3DS MAX and ZBrush.

Interview with cosplayer and artist Bastet

Wed, Dec 7 2011 22:25:44 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Bastet, a cosplayer, digital artist and dancer from Argentina.

Could you briefly describe yourself?

I'm not very good describing myself, but I'll try: I'm the type who works hard to get what I want. If I want a cosplay, I'll work hard to do it, if I want to get better at drawing, I'll try to improve, if I want to have a

good body, I'll work very hard to achieve it, and this is a question I get very often and my answer is always the same: I work hard, and give a lot of time and effort, because people, that's how you get your dreams done.

You're a cosplayer, a digital artist, and you play in music videos, how do you find the time for it all?

I'll do little by little, people only see the results but sometimes I prepare a cosplay for months, and choreography too, everything is time, effort and patience.

What's the artistic scene like in Argentina?

I'm not in contact with the artistic scene in my country, so I really don't know.

How did you get the title The Cat Goddess?

It's not a title. It's only my nick, Bastet is the Egyptian goddess of cats (and she is a cat herself), and I added the Japanese honorific ''sama'' used for very important people and gods. And why did I choose Bastet? Because I love cats that's why, and why did I put the ''sama''? Only because I love Japan, I wanted to merge two things I love very much, that's the secret of my nick lol.

How did you get started in cosplay?

Seeing other cosplayers in conventions a long time ago looked so fun that I wanted to try it too. Anyways I always loved to wear costumes, since I was little, it's fun to play the role of someone else.

Do you have a favorite character or genre you like to cosplay?

I like to cosplay fighting video game characters the most, and I think it fits with me too. I'm more that kind of girl.

Have you ever been in competitions or at conventions?

In conventions, yes, but I avoid going with cosplays unless it's fully necessary (like with my dance team). In competitions, no, I don't like to compete with my cosplays, conventions and competitions are not my thing. I like to try to take the character into reality with my pictures, I'm not really interested in people saying ''Bastet-sama is cosplaying as Poison'' my goal is for people say ''that's Poison'' and forget about me. My opinion is that when the actor is more important than the character, you are losing the point of

cosplay.

How did you get started with drawing characters?

I guess since always, I've been drawing ever since I can remember. I love to draw, to create what I have in mind.

Do you often draw and cosplay the same figures?

Not always, I draw a lot of stuff that I don't cosplay.

Around how much time does it take you for a typical drawing?

Sorry but I'd never look at the time when I draw, so I can't answer this one. But it takes me a lot of time for sure.

You're in a kpop band? How did that happen?

Is not a Kpop band. We are a group of girls who love to dance and not only kpop, we like to dance other stuff too. I used to play in a J-rock band, but I'm not active anymore.

Anything new you're working on that you can tell us about?

I'm working in my B. Jenet cosplay (garou-kof) so I hope you guys enjoy it.

Production focus of Uncharted 3

Wed, Dec 7 2011 22:01:17 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Autodesk published an article containing interviews and production images of **Uncharted 3**, where the artists behind the game talk about how the graphics were created using Mudbox and other tools.

Eyez glasses takes and streams HD video

Wed, Dec 7 2011 21:31:30 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Engadget reports on a new pair of glasses that include both a 720p HD video camera and the needed hardware to stream this video in real time. This kind of personal streaming has become popular a few years ago with iJustine and other people who carried backpacks along with head mounted video cameras. Now, it's all doable from within the frame of a simple pair of glasses.

Artifact for iOS

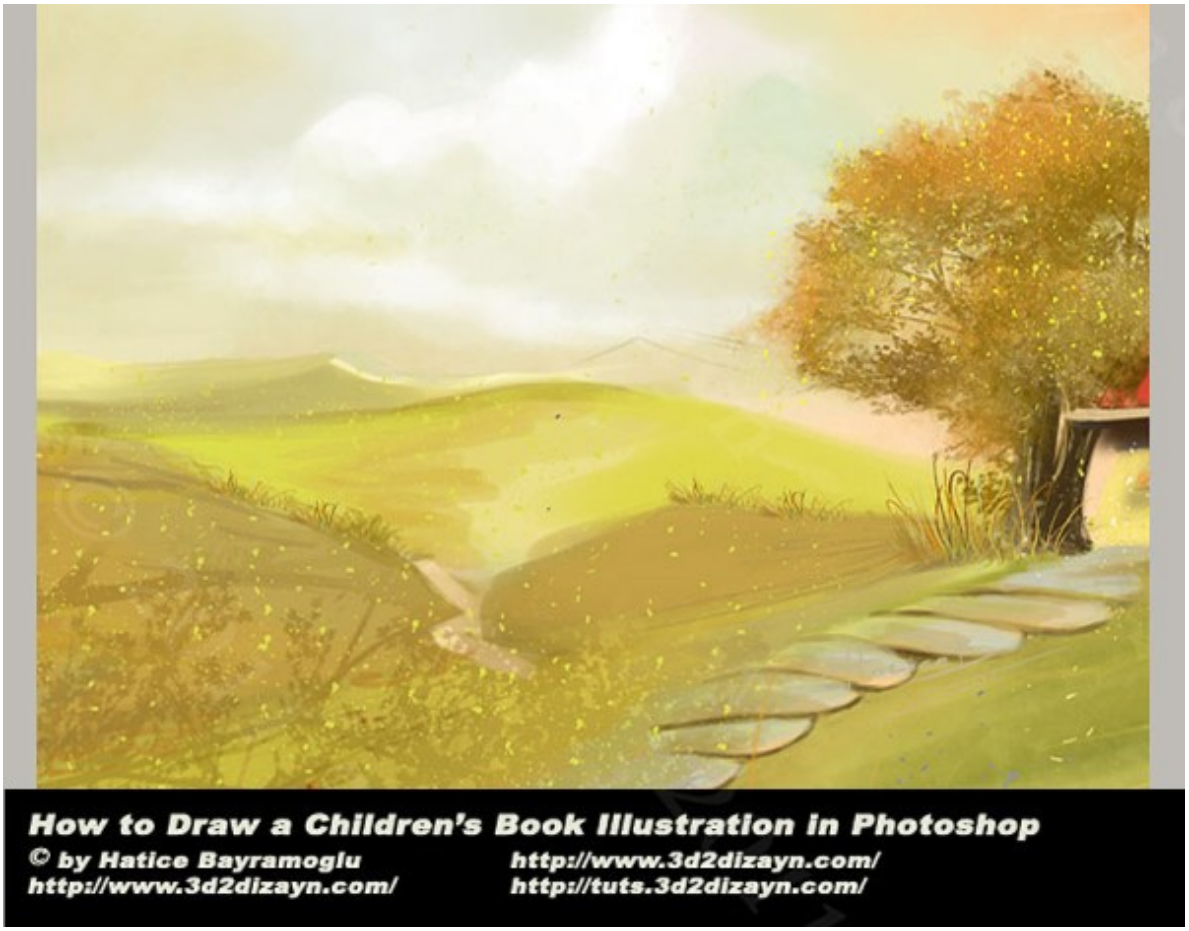
Wed, Dec 7 2011 21:24:53 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

This video shows a new iPhone and iPad app called Artifact, which provides some very cool Photoshop style capabilities for iOS for photo editing.

How to illustrate a children's book in Photoshop

Wed, Dec 7 2011 21:15:16 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Hatice Bayramoglu posted an interesting tutorial on how to illustrate a children's book using Photoshop. The article goes into details of how to create stylized art that respond well to children.



H&M creates the perfect body

Wed, Dec 7 2011 21:03:19 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Publications using Photoshop to digitally enhance models is nothing new, but H&M went one step further. Now, they've created what they consider to be the *perfect body*, and admitted to simply taking model heads, and paste them on top of the same figure. Note that this isn't anyone's real body, but a computer created representation of what they consider to be the best shape available. The body used is completely virtual, and when seeing multiple heads on that one body, it quickly becomes uncanny.

Displacement map rendering in mental ray

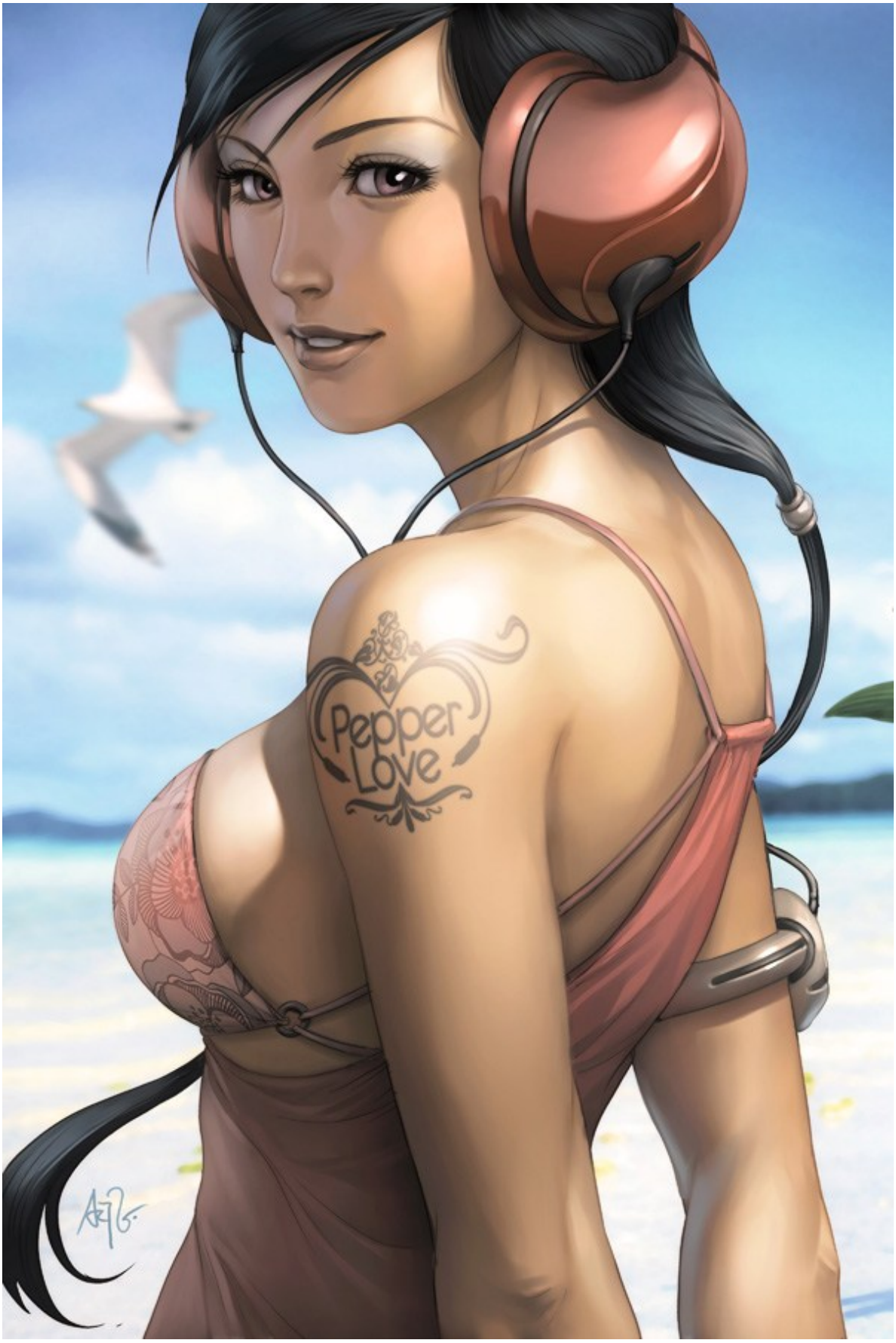
Wed, Dec 7 2011 10:18:48 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Wes McDermott posted a video tutorial on how to use displacement maps with Mental Ray. In this 15 minutes tutorial, he goes through setting up the shader and materials, along with render settings.

Artist showcase: Stanley Lau

Tue, Dec 6 2011 23:02:02 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature Stanley Lau, a digital artist from Singapore.

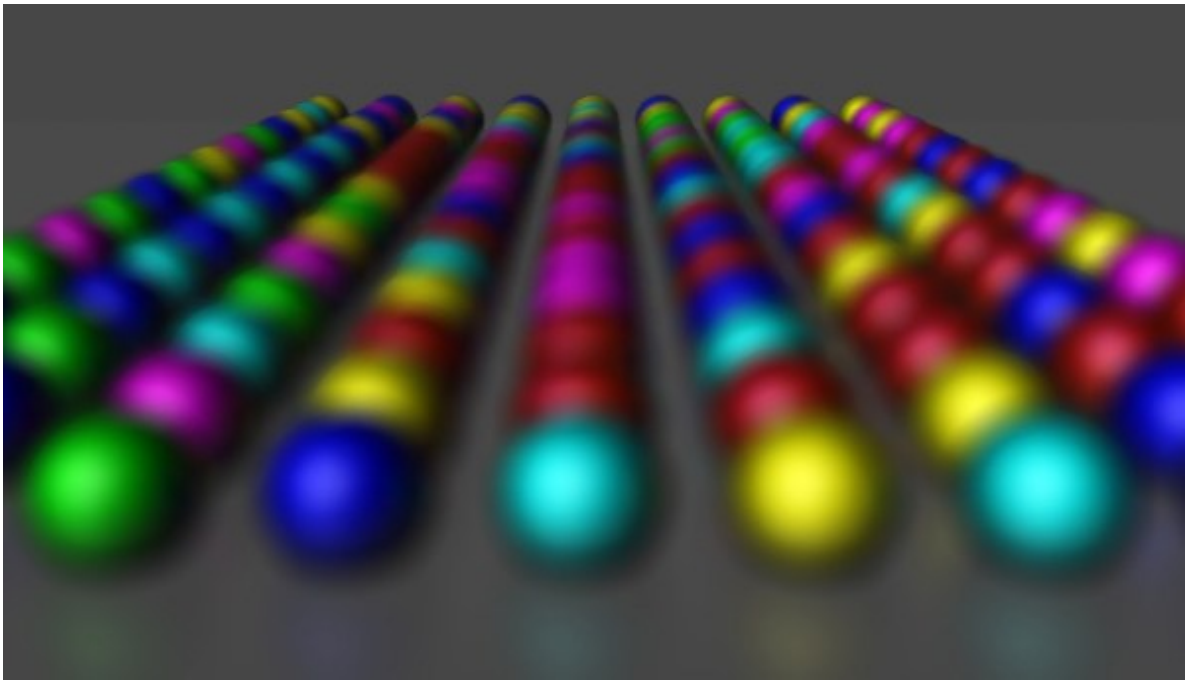

Pepper
Love

FOB PRESENTS
Fallout

Depth of field tutorial in Maya

Tue, Dec 6 2011 21:17:20 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Pratik Gulati posted a 16 steps tutorial on how to create depth of field in Maya and Photoshop, by using z-depth passes. The article goes from initial creation, and follows every step of the way until the final product.



Samsuing flexible AMOLED display

Tue, Dec 6 2011 21:12:28 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under videos

Lately we've seen a lot of futuristic technology concept videos, and Samsung just added its own with a new flexible AMOLED screen. Fantasy or reality? You be the judge.

Procedural texture lighting video tutorial

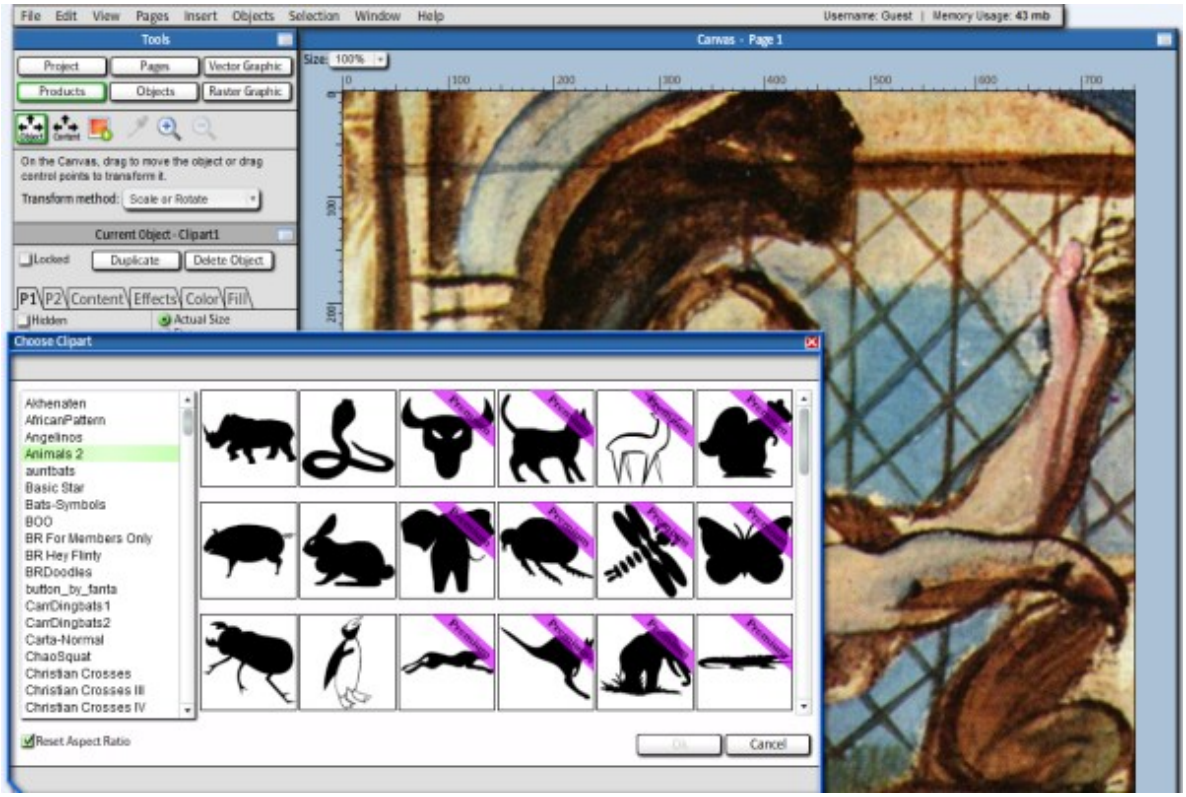
Tue, Dec 6 2011 20:58:25 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Chris Schmidt posted a 40 minutes video tutorial on creating fake HDRs with procedural texture lighting in Cinema 4D.

Interview with creator of Fatpaint

Mon, Dec 5 2011 23:47:14 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Mario Gomes Cavalcanti, the founder of Fatpaint, a web based graphics design application.



Could you briefly describe yourself?

I'm a software developer/architect and have been programming since the age of 13, and the era of

Commodore 64 and Amiga computers. I was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brasil, and currently live in Copenhagen, Denmark. I make a living doing freelance consultancy work.

What is Fatpaint and what are some of its features?

Fatpaint is a full featured, web-based graphic design application, with features so you can edit photos, draw, paint and create pages, illustrations and logos, both vector and pixel based images, using 2D and ray traced 3D technology. It is integrated with Zazzle, so all the images created by the user can be purchased or sold on merchandize. All these features are accessible from within a single, small (860 kilobytes) Adobe Flash application.

Simply looking at the interface, it seems like a very feature-rich product. Did a lot of development work go into it?

Yes, I have been developing Fatpaint since 2005. The project consist of around 500,000 lines of Actionscript and 30,000 lines of Java code. So it is a huge project, a lot of hardcore coding. I would never have started making this project if I knew back then what it would take. Specially after seeing that in general, people and the media don't appreciate this work. So far it has been a financial disaster, but we will continue fighting to make a living out of this. And I'm very proud of the work I have done.

What was some of the initial goals behind the site?

The goal has always been to make the best web-based graphic design application in the world.

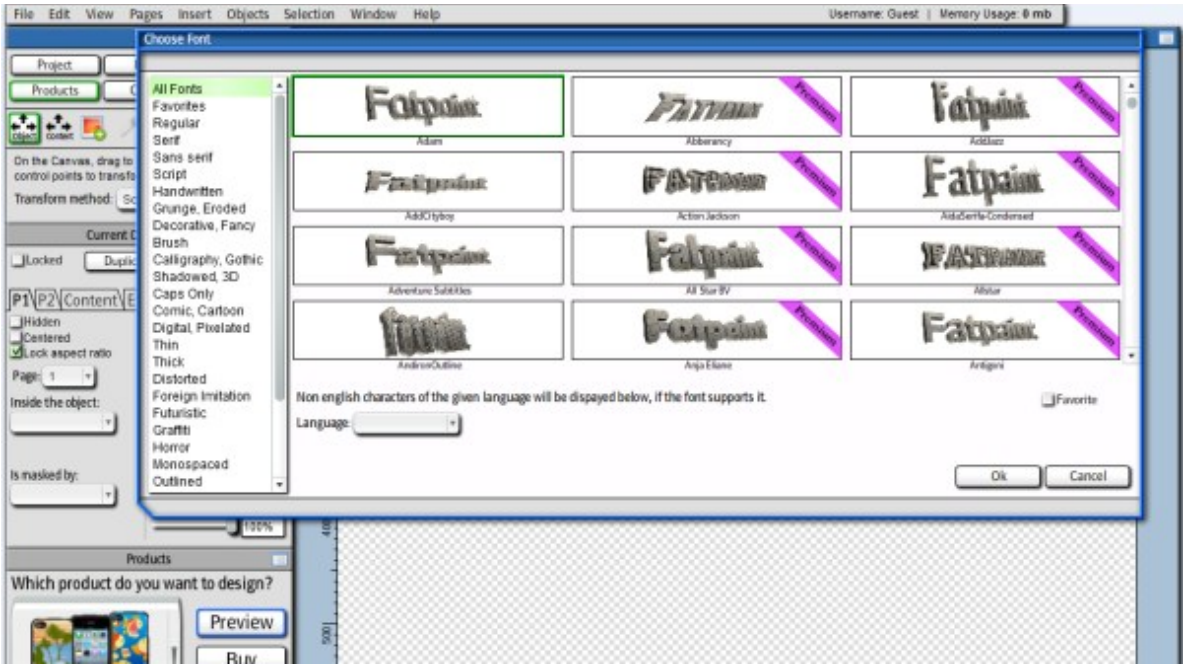
What is your business model for the site, does it make money?

The website is not profitable, the income barely pays for the server expenses. Currently, the business model is displaying advertisement, selling Pro subscriptions and merchandise. Actually the only business model that is currently working out, is displaying advertisement. Just based on the Google advertising income, Fatpaint will be very profitable in a couple of years, when it will have a couple of hundred thousand users.

What is your main target audience for Fatpaint, why would someone use your site as opposed to a 3D modeling program?

In the coming months we will try to make Fatpaint more useful for businesses, because our initial focus on consumers, did not payoff. So now, our main target audience is businesses and we are just in the beginning of this transition.

Fatpaint is currently the only web-app where users can make ray traced 3D graphics. I just began this work and lots of new things will be added in the coming months. I'm not trying to compete against existing 3D modeling programs. I just want to put some of that power online, wrapped inside easy to use interfaces, so anyone will easily be able to make great looking 3D graphics. So if you want to make ray traced 3D graphics the easy way, without spending countless hours figuring out how to use 3D modelling software, Fatpaint.com is the place to go. Currently there is only support for making 3D text, but I'll soon add a bunch of other features. Online tools for making ray traced 3D graphics is something completely new, we are the first company doing this and we are very excited.



The site offers both Java and Flash. Are these identical? Why two versions?

The site only offers a Flash based interface. Java is only used for doing background work that is not possible to do with Flash.

One cool feature seems to be the availability of hundreds of fonts, how do you manage that many fonts and do you add new ones?

I picked up the best free fonts, clip-arts and public domain images I could find on the internet. To make graphics you need these things, so I figured it is a must to have.

What are some of the latest features you've added to Fatpaint?

The latest feature is ray traced 3D text. Ray traced 3D graphics will be the foundation of all coming features the months ahead. I see a lot of potential there, and it's a great opportunity to be the first with an online product offering this kind of features.

What kind of user feedback do you get, and do you know what the typical use case is?

I'm not getting much feedback from our users. I'm basically doing things the way I feel things should be, with little input from users... I guess that is not optimal, but that's how it is. I will try to put more effort on changing this going forward.

You know, I'm the only person doing all the work, so it's far from optimal. Imagine all the things I have to do... Develop new stuff, fix bugs, take care of the business and so on... I would be much better off partnering with Corel, Adobe, Google or some other big company within the graphics design industry, so I hope that will happen one day. In the meantime, I'll keep adding value to the product, and make it easier to use. I'm trying to do the best I can on this project, it's very hard being alone on this, but I think things will turn out alright.

Fatpaint has around 24,000 new unique visitors per month, growing at an healthy pace of 15% a month, so I guess I'm doing some things right 😀*, but our users don't bother to pay for the software nor write on forums, report bugs or anything. I'm quite disappointed about that.*

I see that many of our users, are making graphics to promote their business. Our users spend on average 30 minutes on each visit, many are spending hours, so that is great. It means Fatpaint is being useful to thousands of people from all over the world.

Are you working on anything new you can talk about?

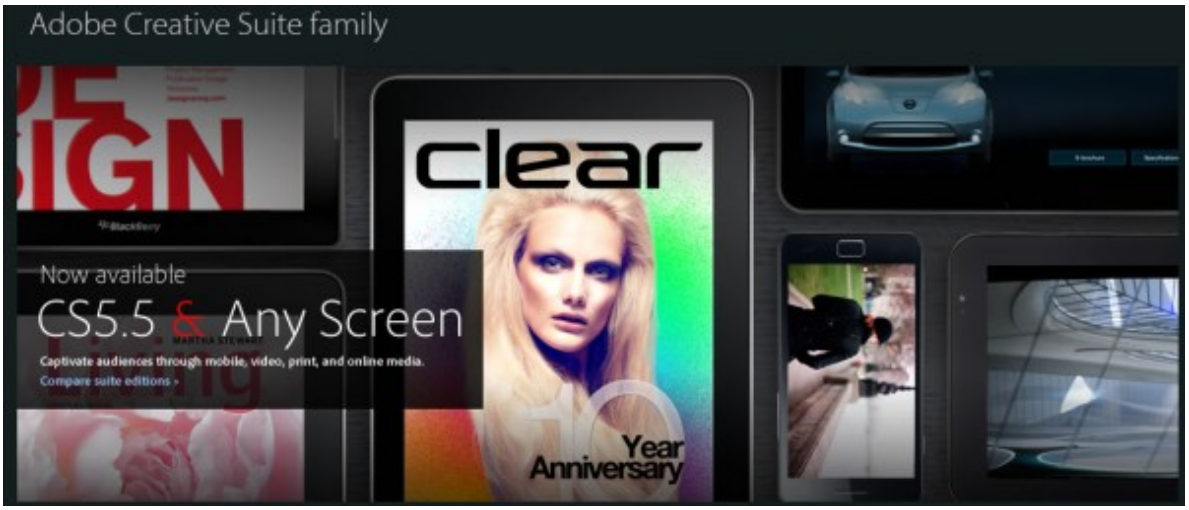
We are working on more ray traced 3D features.

I would like to say thanks for the opportunity of having this interview.

Adobe restricts upgrade policy

Mon, Dec 5 2011 21:08:53 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Last month, in a blog post titled *New Choices for Customers*, Adobe actually announced that they were changing their upgrade policy for Creative Suite 6. Before, users could get a discounted upgrade price even if they were 1 or 2 versions behind. Starting with CS6, this changes, and only CS5 users will be eligible for upgrade.



Since then, there's been a lot of complaints about this new policy, with users saying that this move is bad for customers, and was announced too late, pleading with Adobe to delay the adoption of the new policy by a year.

Adobe has now responded to the criticism, saying *''The changes to our upgrade policy, for customers who would like to continue to purchase CS software as a perpetual license, benefits customers who are on the latest versions of our software. We have promotions that enable customers to upgrade to the latest CS version ahead of CS6 at a reduced rate - at the moment we are offering 20% off any upgrade to the latest version of their Adobe software.''*

Basically, it seems like if you delayed getting CS5, thinking you might skip it, now you may be forced to upgrade, unless you want to pay full price next year, or stay behind. Adobe is unlikely to reverse course at this point.

Creating a flickering light in 3DS MAX

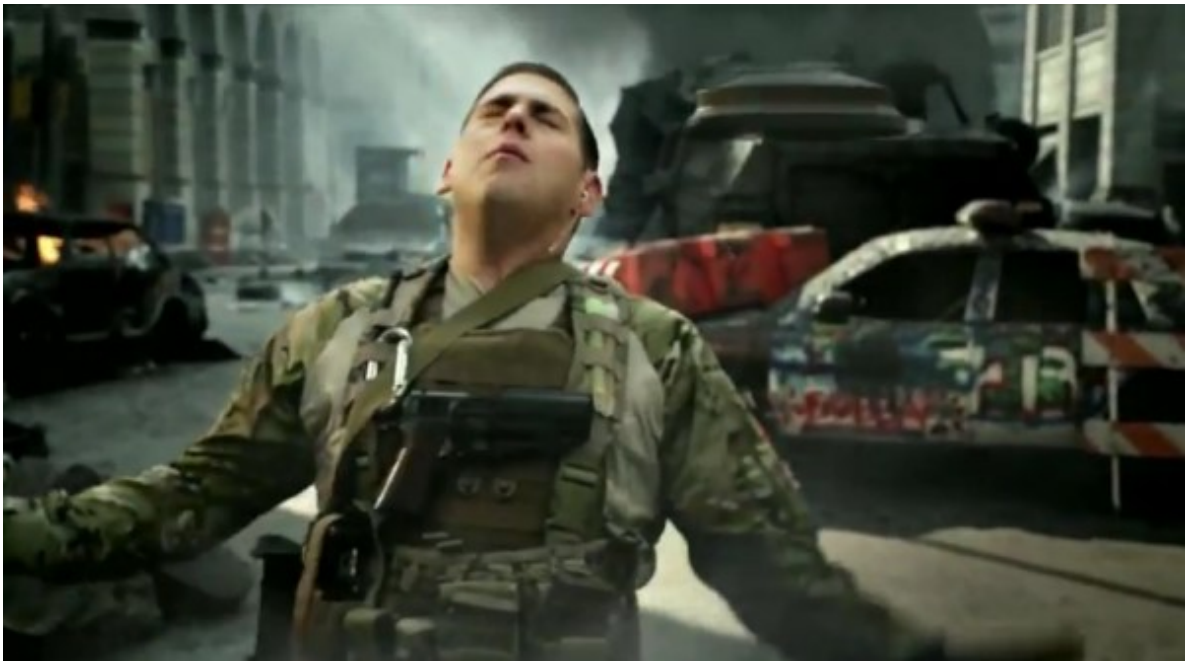
Mon, Dec 5 2011 19:59:28 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Chandan Kumar posted a 20 minutes long video tutorial talking about creating a light bulb in 3DS MAX, and how to make it look like flickering light. He goes over the bulb creation, along with making the flickering effect using parameter wiring.

Most shared YouTube ads

Mon, Dec 5 2011 19:46:55 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

We reported YouTube's recent success as measured by comScore a while back, but now Mashable has an interesting gallery of the top 20 shared ads on YouTube in November.



The rise and fall of Kodak

Mon, Dec 5 2011 19:39:57 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

As traditional creations move to the digital age, no company exemplifies best how hard it can be to adapt than Eastman Kodak. Started in 1880, Kodak was at the forefront of technology back when photography and film making was still a dream. This company invented roll film, the basis for traditional motion pictures, along with the first fixed-focus consumer camera in 1888. In many ways, it brought photography and film making into the hands of millions.

Kodak

Throughout the 1900s, Kodak grew from the brainchild of George Eastman to an international corporation. Ironically enough, the first digital camera was invented by an engineer at Eastman Kodak in 1975. But with this invention, the company also started on its downward spiral. Kodak tried many times to embrace digital technologies, but eventually failed. The company hasn't been profitable since 2007, getting huge losses, and now reports indicate that Kodak may be on the brink of bankruptcy.

In 1997, Kodak was worth $31 billion. This week, it's worth $210 million. Most of its current plans rely on its patent portfolio, and not on sales of digital cameras. So what went wrong? There's multiple factors. The fact that Kodak tried to stick to film for too long, while the world was moving to digital medias. A series of acquisitions and partnerships throughout the last decade. And the failure from its board to evolve the company fast enough.

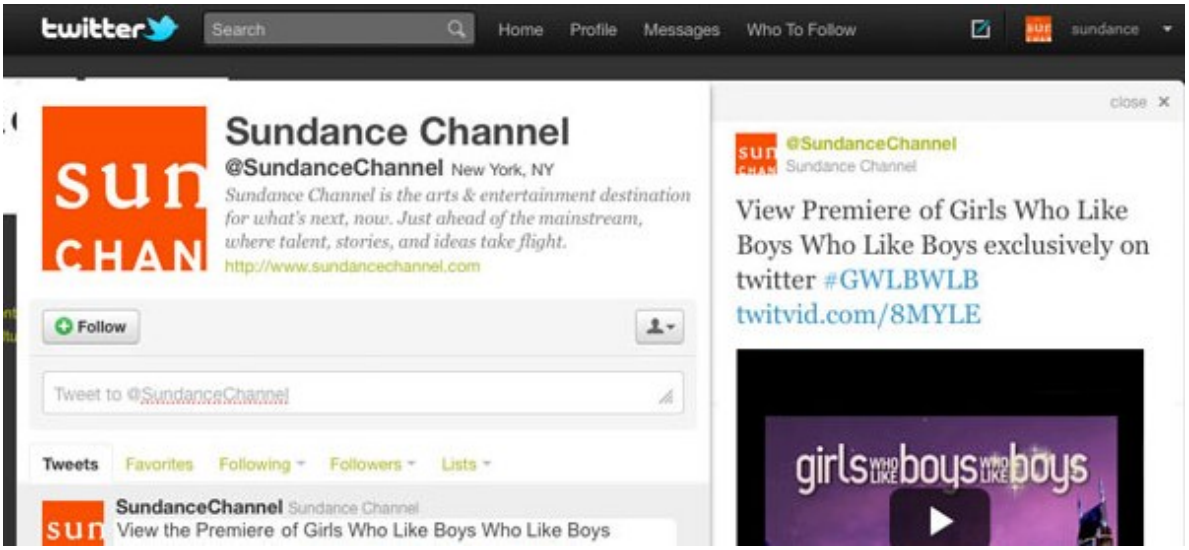
Ironically, in 2000 Kodak claimed that it would become the premiere vendor of digital cameras, and by 2005 it was one of the top players, with its digital sales at $5.1 billion, while its film business was in free fall. The problem, according to the company's CEO Antonio M. Perez, is that the digital business doesn't have the vast profits of their old, traditional film business. Long studies were written about the failure of the company to adapt.

The short story is a failure of management, and a lack of innovation in a changing world. The production of cameras became a commodity industry, with lots of companies making cheap consumer devices, and Kodak couldn't differentiate itself, or move into new businesses fast enough, trailing behind the competition with a large baggage from its early days. At this point, Kodak is no longer seen as a competitive brand, and most of its remaining potential lays in patents, and not consumer products. It's a story that has been repeated in many businesses, but in the case of Kodak, it really is a giant that fell down, and is now on life support.

Ways the movie industry uses Twitter

Mon, Dec 5 2011 19:10:53 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

The film and movie industry has been notoriously slow to adopt digital technologies, fighting for their traditional business models. But now, we see more studios, producers and artists using tools like Twitter to connect with fans and promote their creations. Mashable has an article about 5 ways this industry uses Twitter, from premiering content to advertising and connecting with fans.



McDonald's embraces digital media

Mon, Dec 5 2011 19:02:33 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

In another example of a company embracing digital media and social networks, McDonald's has announced a project of 10 short digital films to be posted online, where people are invited to submit ideas for the creations, and win prizes. The creator of the top video will get $15,000 while other winning videos will be given lower amounts. Details are available on the production firm's page.

Artist showcase: Viccolatte

Sat, Dec 3 2011 20:35:32 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we feature the great art of Viccolatte, a female artist from Sweden.

http://viccolatte.deviantart.com

©Victoria Klepkova

Making of Digital Nativity Scene

Sat, Dec 3 2011 20:27:05 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under videos

MPC was hired to create a very unique looking exhibit for Christmas at the Covent Garden, a nativity scene on a large screen that would be in constant motion, and ever changing, modifying itself constantly and randomly. See how they accomplished it in this video.

Behind the scenes video of Happy Feet Two

Fri, Dec 2 2011 23:55:33 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The Daily posted a behind the scenes video showing how the motion capture in **Happy Feet Two** was done, and how those penguins came to live.

Eleven Rig video tutorial

Fri, Dec 2 2011 20:49:15 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In this video, Claus Ilkjaer talks about **Eleven Rig**, a popular community rig, and shows us how to use it.

Making of Rosso interior scene in 3DS MAX

Fri, Dec 2 2011 20:44:55 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Alfa Smyrna posted a fairly long and in-depth article showing how he created his very realistic indoors scene **Rosso** using 3DS MAX. In it, he goes over the whole creation process, all the way to the V-Ray

render settings.

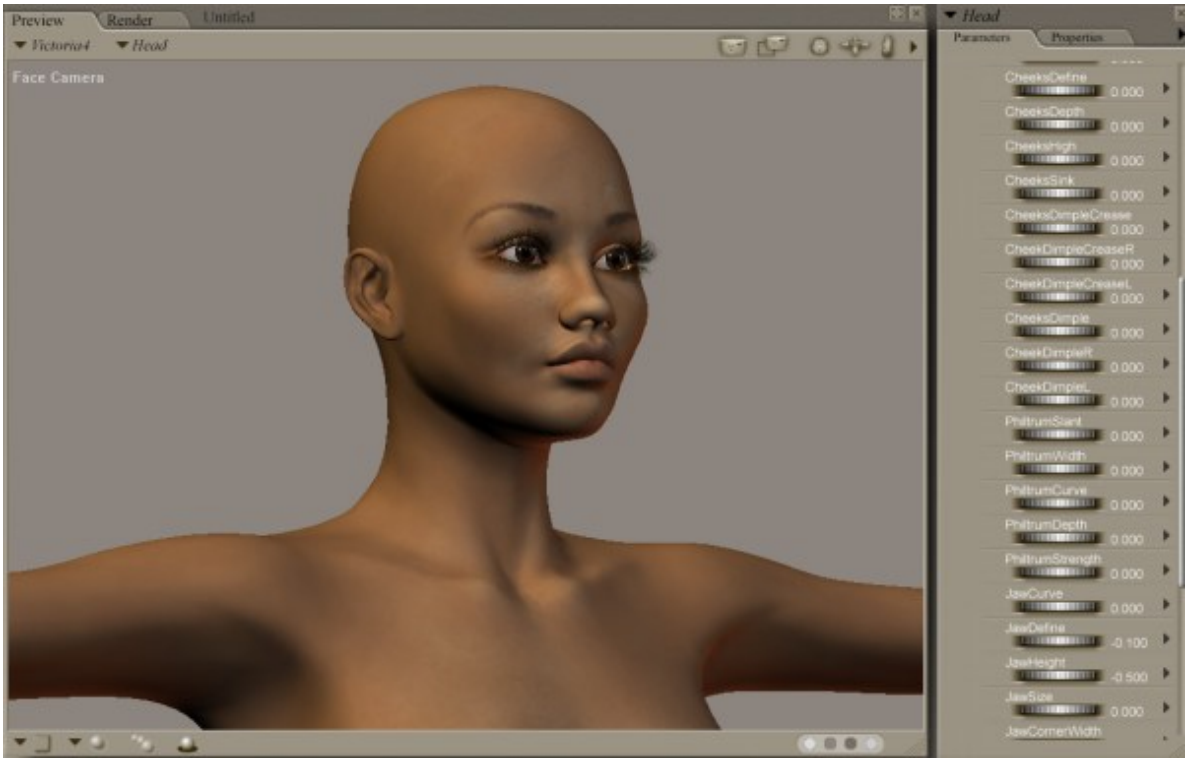
Creation of Chiss Operative render in Poser and Vue

Thu, Dec 1 2011 23:41:10 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Today I'll show you, step by step, how my Star Wars fan art **Chiss Operative** was created, using the software programs Poser 7, Vue 6.5 and Paint.NET for post-work. Overall, the entire process took around 4 hours, plus render which lasted almost 5 hours. I use mostly pre-made 3D content purchased from DAZ 3D and Renderosity.

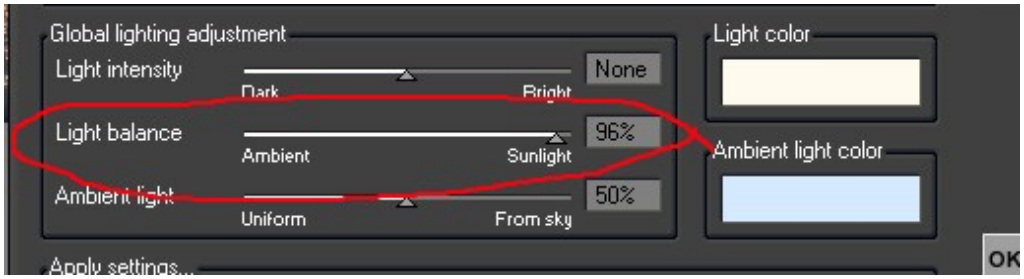
The first step of the process is always creating the characters themselves. For that I use Poser exclusively. Both characters in this case are female figures, Victoria 4 from DAZ. The process of building them is fairly straight forward, and includes loading up textures from pre-made characters, along with outfits from Pretty3D and Aery Soul, both from Renderosity. The morphs, or body shapes, are custom made by myself directly in Poser, with a process known as dial turning.

Basically, the Victoria 4 character Morphs++ package allows me to move hundreds of different settings to create the faces and body morphs I need, along with the right expressions. In this case, my goal was to portray the Chiss Operative as a strong figure, both physically, with a fit, powerful body, but also through her expression. Some of the features that convey that include well defined cheek bones, wide open eyes, and a hand on her hip. The victim instead needed to be shown in a submissive pose, including eyes looking down, her head turned to the side, and her hands bound behind her back.



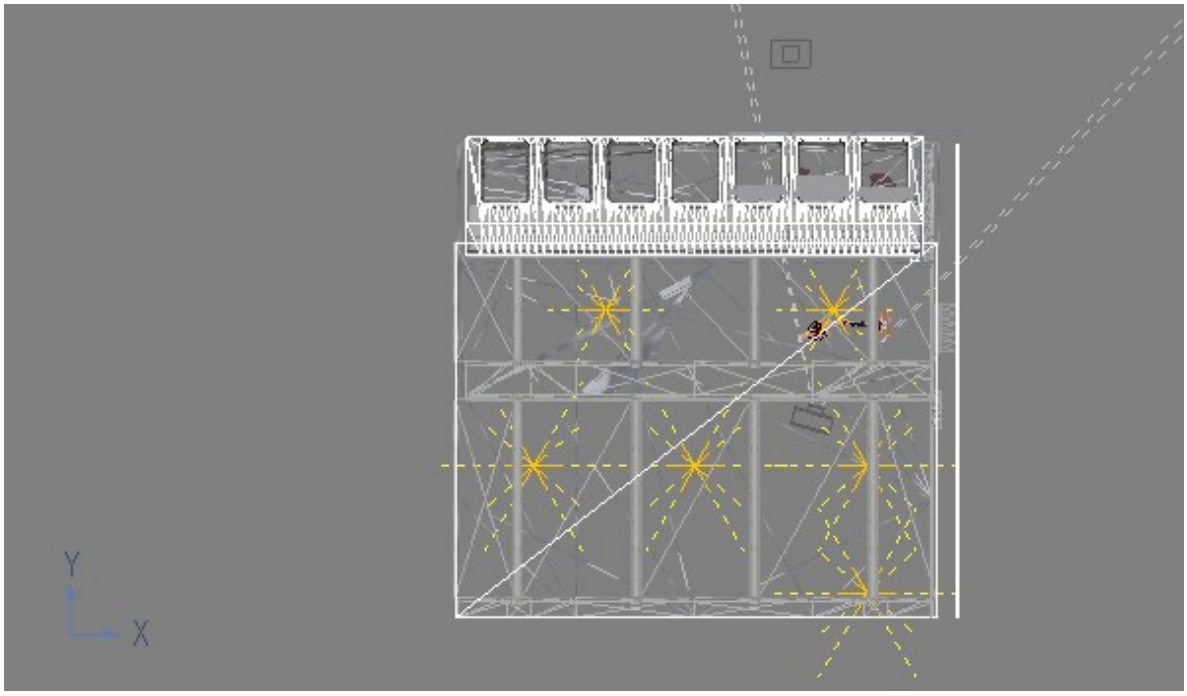
Once the figures are done, along with expressions, hair and clothing, then I do everything else in Vue. The scene creation can start, and the first step is importing the saved Poser files. Vue can import .PZ3 files directly which helps a lot, since there's no conversion to go through. I still go through all of the materials and adjust shaders for all of them, but we'll go over that later. First, once the characters are in the otherwise empty scene, I set the camera and basic render settings.

The first setting I change is the *Light Balance* in the *Atmosphere Editor*. I like to use very high values for this, which provides a sharper look with more contrast, and doesn't look washed out.



Then, it's time to add environment props. The walls, chairs, table, shelves and windows are part of the Modern Bedroom set by C-D-C at Renderosity, and I typically position each element manually to go well with the scene that I want. In this case, I wanted something that looked like a sci-fi Coruscant apartment, a living quarter, so I positioned them in this way. For the outside view, I actually used a previous render I already had, using an *Alpha Plane* in Vue. One handy trick here is to change the settings of the material in this Alpha Plane, and set the *Lighting Effects* to *Diffuse: 0%*, *Ambient: 0%* and *Luminous: 100%*. This makes the image look much more realistic and prevents the scene lights from affecting this back plane.

Speaking of lighting, the way I like to do my lighting is to use point lights, and position them pretty much how I would expect lights to be placed around a real room. I deleted the sun, and added 6 point lights across the scene. I try not to use too few or too many, and position them to get good shadows. As for the light settings, I adjust the power so the scene is nicely lit, then change the shadows to 75%, and add 5 degrees of *Soft Shadows*. This is very important to not get very sharp, unnatural shadow edges, or have them be too dark.



Once that's done, the longest process actually starts, and that's manually adjusting every material shader to look just right. The problem with a lot of pre-made 3D content is that the shaders are made for going around some of the limitations of the Poser renderer. For example, almost every metallic surface uses a grey reflection map. This creates a very bright, unnatural look. I always get rid of them, and instead use ray-traced reflections. Some of the settings I change for most materials include bump maps, specularity, reflection and color reflected light. For the Chiss skin, I simply change the *Overall Color* to a tint of blue

that I like, and do the same with the eyes with red, and max out the *Luminous* setting.

After I'm satisfied with the shaders and the overall look, I go through a few test renders and then do the final render. One tip here is to always render at twice the resolution than what you need. This helps reduce aliasing. Here, I render at 2560x1600 to get a result of 1280x800 pixels. After that, I apply very few post-work filters in Paint.NET. Mostly, I add sharpness and change the saturation. Here's a before and after of the post-work process. You can see the overall look is sharper, and the silver necklace looks more like actual metal.

Poll: Do you make money from your art?

Thu, Dec 1 2011 21:09:44 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

With the economy the way it is, there's no question that every industry suffers from a lack of work, lowered number of contracts, and sometimes even decreasing salaries. What about art? Do you make money from your creations? Is it just a hobby, or do you actually make a full time living from it? A lot of freelance workers have seen their wages reduced lately as companies cut down on extra expenses. If your income has increased or decreased lately due to economical factors, let us know in the comments!

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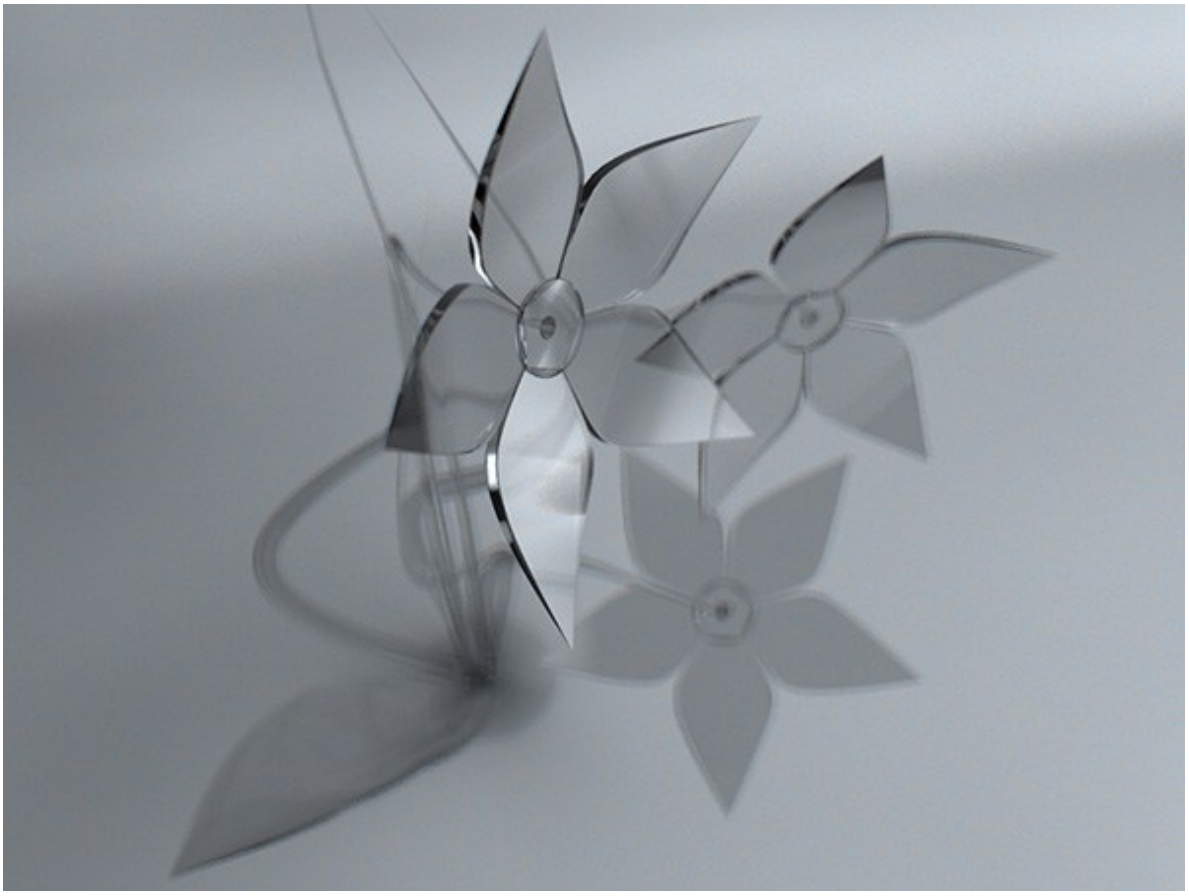
Cinema 4D physical renderer tutorial

Thu, Dec 1 2011 19:14:46 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Konstantin Muromtsev posted a 48 steps tutorial showing how to create an artificial flower in Cinema 4D, using the new physical renderer, which allows different kinds of photographic effects, like Depth Of Field, Chromatic Aberration, Vignetting and Lens Distortion. The article covers every step from initial creation to final render.



The VFX of Hugo

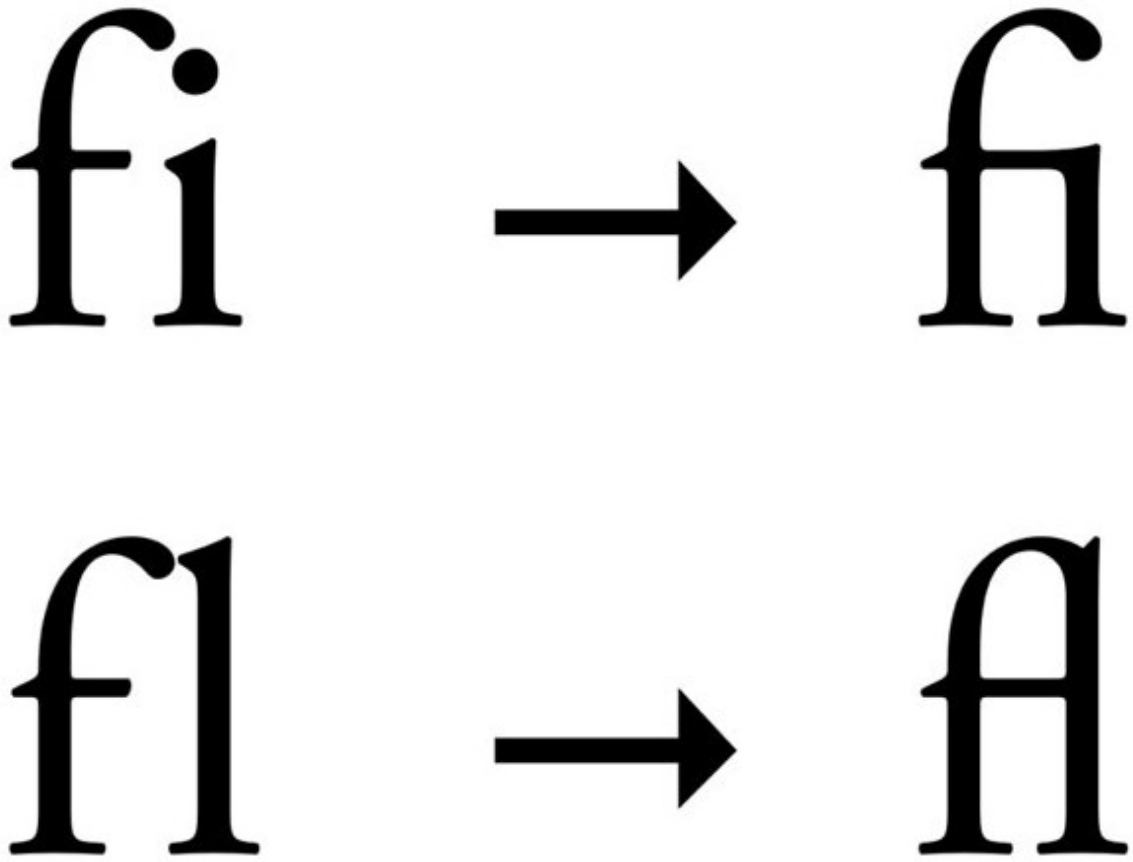
Thu, Dec 1 2011 19:10:02 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

CGArena has a short article about the movie **Hugo**, the latest blockbuster featuring a young boy and his adventures through many different environments. The short piece shows some of the behind the scenes shots and talks about how Pixomondo achieved a unique look for this movie.

Features of web fonts

Thu, Dec 1 2011 19:01:58 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

A lot of designers create content for the web, and that can include layouts with text. Typography is an important part of the overall design of a page, so using the right font matters. But when there's no web based font that fits the bill, you may be tempted to create one. Web fonts have specific requirements, however. Mashable has a quick article about how web fonts get created, and some of the features they must have.



Photoshop celebrity comparisons

Thu, Dec 1 2011 9:16:55 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

It's well known that celebrity photos get the Photoshop treatment, where they get beautified in post-processing, but professor Hany Farid at Dartmouth College posted some good before and after examples that show how frightening the difference can be.

More on his site...

Mazda built web based CGI car

Wed, Nov 30 2011 20:09:58 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Ars Thanea, a design agency, created a complete CGI car for a new site Mazda launched called Gram Strategy, in which users can scroll down a weight meter and see the 3D car in real time update itself with each component that makes up this weight. It's pretty cool looking and makes good use of 3D.

3DConnexion SpaceMouse Pro

Wed, Nov 30 2011 19:59:05 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

3DConnexion yesterday announced it's latest product, the SpaceMouse Pro. Well known for its various unusual control systems, 3DConnexion has been making 3D mice for a while, and this is their latest model. According to their site, the 3D mouse features a full six degrees of control, 15 programmable keys, advanced ergonomic design, intuitive 3D navigation and on-screen visual support. The device is available now for $299.

Mari 1.4 released

Wed, Nov 30 2011 19:50:56 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The Foundry, the company behind well known VFX software like Nuke, released **Mari 1.4**, the latest version of their 3D digital painting tool. Mari allows artists to focus on the painting process instead of grappling with technical issues, especially useful for texture artists and matte painters.

Some of the new features include:

- PSD workflows for textures and projections
- Industry leading colour managment via OpenColorIO
- Live Triplanar projections for flexible seamless coverage
- Zoom tool
- Realtime colour correction modules
- Masked filtering for exact control
- C API for data import / export
- Hundreds of improvements and optimizations

The company also produced a video to show some of the new features in action.

Generative art video documentary

Wed, Nov 30 2011 19:41:47 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

PBS has a short documentary about computer based generative art, the process of creating art from data and graphs.

comScore says 42.6 billion online videos seen in October

Wed, Nov 30 2011 0:44:38 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

comScore released its October numbers about the hours people in the US spend in front of online videos, and the charts once again show record high figures. On average, each viewer saw 21.1 hours of video content during the month, for a total of 42.6 billion videos, a new record. Google web sites, mostly YouTube, was the main destination of these views, while Hulu was at the top of the chart for top online video ads, and VEVO was the biggest content partner for YouTube.

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nDo2 Photoshop plugin for normal mapping

Tue, Nov 29 2011 22:29:43 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The team behind nDo2, a new Photoshop plugin that can create normal maps from a variety of sources, released a trailer showing their plugin in action.

Artist showcase: Sandara

Tue, Nov 29 2011 22:14:33 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature the art of Sandara, a digital artist from Singapore.

Project Pandora cloud rendering

Tue, Nov 29 2011 12:01:02 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Autodesk posted a video showing some of the workflow in 3DS MAX to use cloud rendering, using a project called Pandora, a research collaboration between Autodesk and Nvidia.

Behind the scenes video of Volkswagen hedgehog

Tue, Nov 29 2011 11:54:49 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Akama, the producers behind the latest Volkswagen ad, **Hedgehog**, posted an interesting behind the scenes video, showing how the spot was made, including the animation of model hedgehogs.

Cinema 4D Caustics video tutorial

Mon, Nov 28 2011 21:57:30 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Nick Campbell posted a video tutorial that explains Caustics in Cinema 4D. He explains how they work, and

how to use them properly in this 10 minutes video.

Surreal photo-manipulation tutorial in Photoshop

Mon, Nov 28 2011 21:47:21 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Muhammad Waseem Amjad posted a quick tutorial on how to create a surrealist photo-manipulation in Photoshop. The article goes through setting up the scene, bringing all the elements in, and applying various layers and filters to create the finished image.

Building interior with FinalRender video tutorial

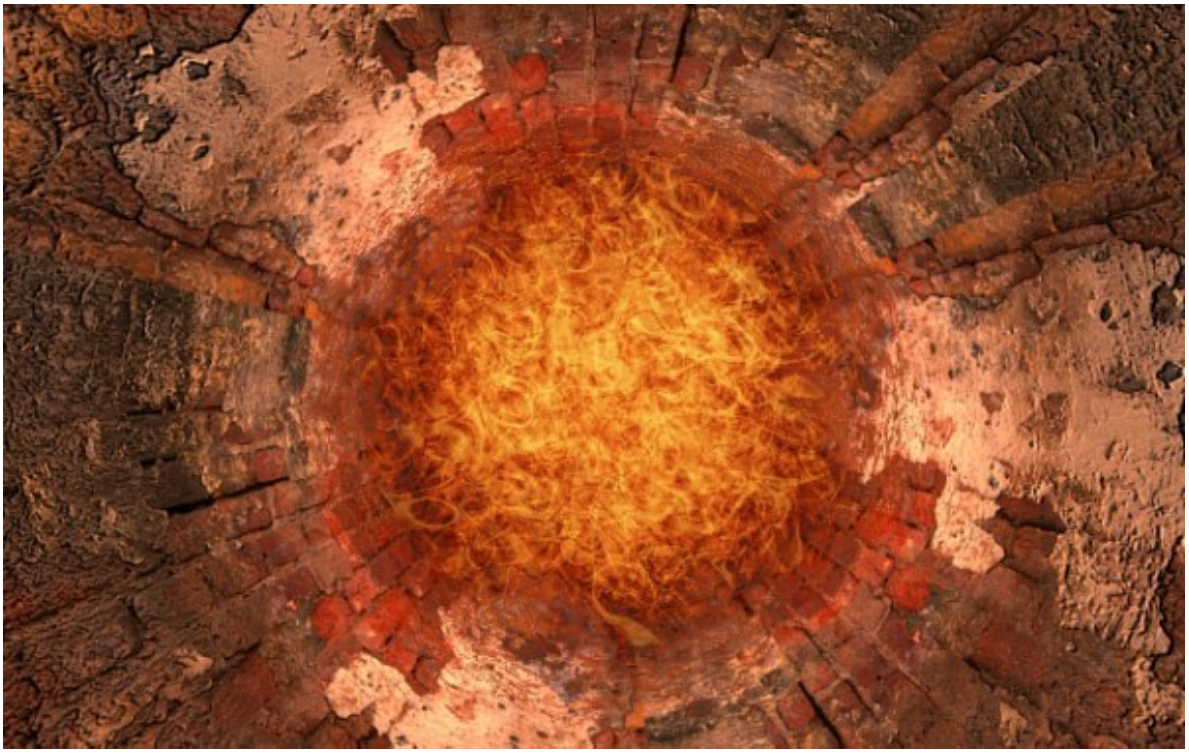
Mon, Nov 28 2011 21:43:00 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

CebasTV posted a new video tutorial showing how to build an interior in 3DS MAX using FinalRender, showing everything from the initial shapes to lighting and ray-tracing settings.

Electric and BlurFire 3DS MAX plugins tutorial

Mon, Nov 28 2011 11:29:05 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Chandan Kumar posted an interesting video tutorial featuring some free 3DS MAX plugins called Electric and BlurFire that allow you to produce some nice fiery results. In the 9 minutes presentation, he shows how to get the plugins, how they work, and what you can do with them.



Interview with A Walk in the Dark indie game maker

Sun, Nov 27 2011 19:13:17 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Paulo Silva, one of the creators behind the indie game A Walk in the Dark and its recently released trailer.

Could you briefly describe yourself?

My name is Paulo Silva. I'm 26 years old and I live in Portugal. I'm an artist that usually works in 3D. I started studying 3D a few years ago, fascinated by movies like Toy Story and 3D games. Along my path I learned that 2D and 3D weren't that much different, the tools were just a bit different. It's you as an artist that must have the passion and skill to do great artwork. I love to tell stories and to make people feel something with my works.

What is A Walk in the Dark?

A Walk in the Dark is a project that I started with Bruno Vidal about a year ago. We worked together in a multimedia software company. We both wanted to work as game developers, but unfortunately in our country there aren't many options, so we started to do a game on our own. The freedom of doing our own project appealed to us. Along the way we lost our full-time jobs due to the adverse economic situation that is affecting Portugal. After that we started doing this project full time. The growth of Digital distribution and self-publishing makes us believe that is possible for this kind of projects to be successful.

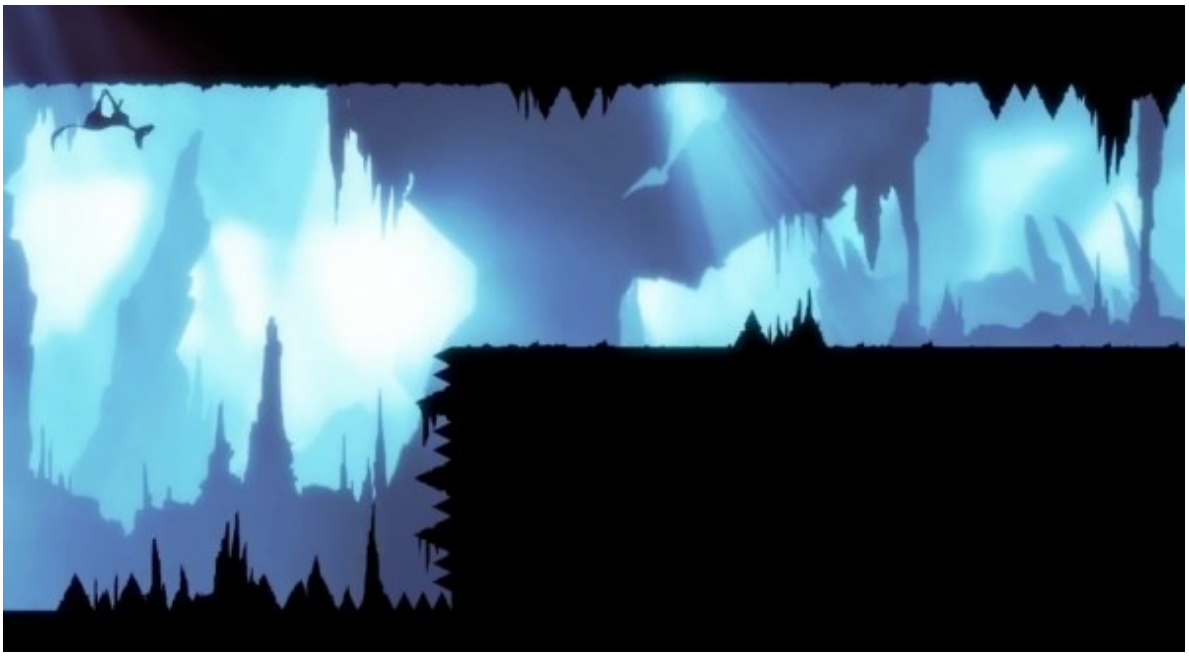
You released an interesting trailer for the game that seems to be made of 3D and

2D elements along with shots from the game, can you talk about how it was made?

Yes, as you said we mix 3D element with 2D elements. The characters are fully 3D while the environments are 2D paintings. Because the environments were painted they have a moody and illustrative quality. We have a lot of control about the lighting and the colors. To add depth to the environment they were broken into layers and projected to 3D planes that matched their positions in 3D space. This way it is possible to have camera movements with the environment matching the characters. To bring it all together they were rendered in layers and some color correction was applied.

How did you get the idea to make that type of cinematic, instead of just showing videos from the gameplay?

For an indie game developer it ain't easy to be noticed, there are a lot of people on the Internet. *And we don't have a marketing budget, so paid advertising was out of the question. So we decided to do a cinematic trailer to promote our game, it is something that is rarely seen in the indie game community. We though that this way we would catch people attention. With the cinematic I wanted to present characters that live in our game, to show the relations between them. Another advantage is that now people have a better idea of the characters and environments, and their imagination can fill in the blank spaces that the gameplay graphics cannot show. I hope it adds a bit more depth to the world when you're playing it.*



How long did it take to create, and which software programs did you use?

The trailer took about two months from concept to final render. Initially I was aiming for one month to one month and a half, but the smoke simulations required a lot of tweaking and baking time, so it ended up being two months. The main software used was blender, all the modeling, animation, simulations and rendering were done with it.

Do you see the game as more of a craft or an art form?

I guess it is a bit of both. Good games always make us fell emotions, Joy, Affection, Fear, Happiness, so I definitely believe that games can be an art form. But no one wants to play a game that is buggy, runs slow or is poorly designed, so it needs both.

Can you tell us when it's getting released and for which platforms?

We don't have a set date yet, but it will definitely be in 2012. Hopefully Q1 For now we are targeting PC via Digital distribution.

Anything else you'd like to say?

Support indie developers! There are a lot of projects that are being done by small teams and have a lot of quality. While not having the production budget of AAA games they can be as fun to play. So be sure to keep an eye out. And if you're an artist or a programmer and want to work in games, why not start one of your own? It ain't easy, but it's certainly possible! Start with something small during off work hours and see how it goes. You'll never know if you don't try it!

Self improvement for designers

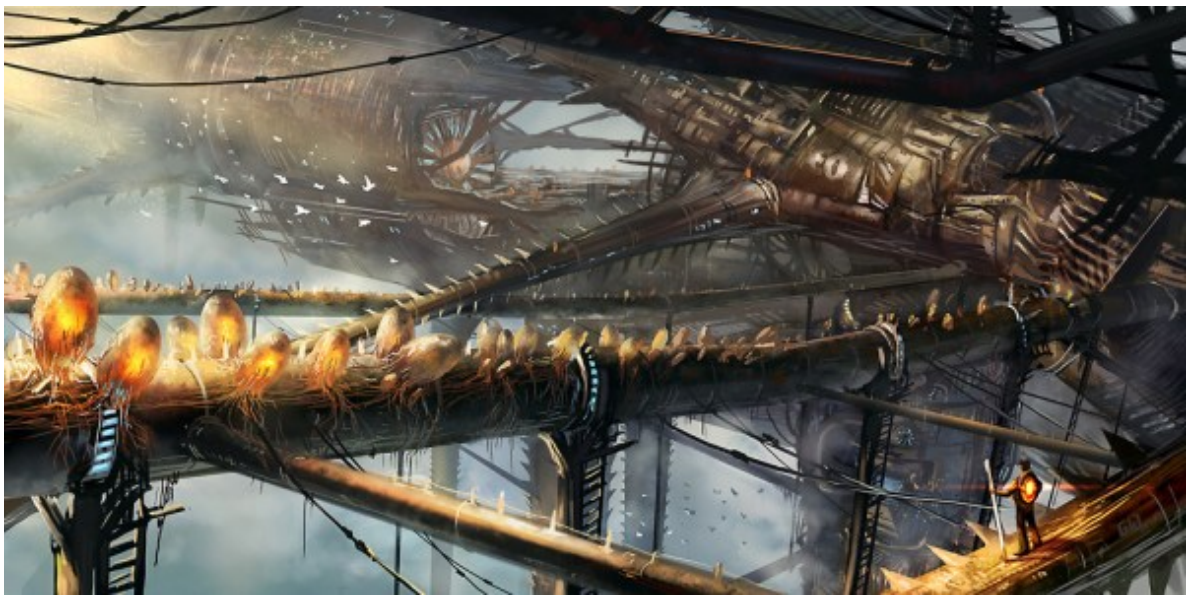
Sat, Nov 26 2011 18:17:53 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Designzzz has an interesting article aimed at designers, describing tips for self improvement, such as reading design blogs, using social media and attending seminars. Check it out if your career involves dealing with clients.

Artist showcase: Nguyen Hoang Gia

Sat, Nov 26 2011 17:24:42 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we feature the digital paintings of Nguyen Hoang Gia, also referred to as GunsBins, a landscape artist from Vietnam.



IXOR ad behind the scenes video

Fri, Nov 25 2011 15:13:11 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

RealFlow posted an interesting behind the scenes video of a commercial by IXOR VFX where a live actress pops virtual balloons.

Star Wars cinematic VFX breakdown

Fri, Nov 25 2011 3:03:21 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Blur Studio, the maker of many great game cinematics, posted a short VFX breakdown from the recent Star Wars: The Old Republic Alderaan trailer.

Thanksgiving deals for artists

Thu, Nov 24 2011 18:00:09 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Each year most stores offer great deals for Thanksgiving, Black Friday or Cyber Monday, and this year is no exception. Here's some of the most interesting deals around the web for artists.

Adobe has a lot of deals, all of which end on November 29. Some of the discounts include 50% off Photoshop Elements, 30% off Photoshop, $100 off Lightroom, 30% off Creative Suite, and more.

Corel offers deals as well, ending on Nov 25 at midnight. You can get $150 off CorelDRAW, $50 off PaintShop Pro, and $180 off Painter12, among others.

Smith Micro offers a 60% off coupon for Poser Pro and Poser 9, ending on Nov 30 at midnight. Use the code *BLACKFRIDAY2011*.

For 3D models, **Renderosity** offers a 25% coupon on any purchase above $25 until Nov 26. Use the code *11252011B25P25* at checkout.

Apple once again promised to have deals available, however they will only reveal them on Friday.

Amazon has a 50% off Black Friday deal on **Sony Vegas Movie Studio**, along with a 61% deal on **Smith Micro's Anime Studio EX 4**, and an impressive 79% deal on **Adobe CS5.5 Design Standard Student and Teacher Edition**.

DeviantART is offering 25% off canvas prints for any order.

Luxology is offering all their 3D Modo construction kits for 35% until Nov 30.

If you need hardware, **NewEgg** has a long Black Friday page with everything from computers to accessories.

Finally, if you want to go out, you can find a lot of deals at **Best Buy** on cameras, computers and more.

Autodesk 2012 show reel call for submissions

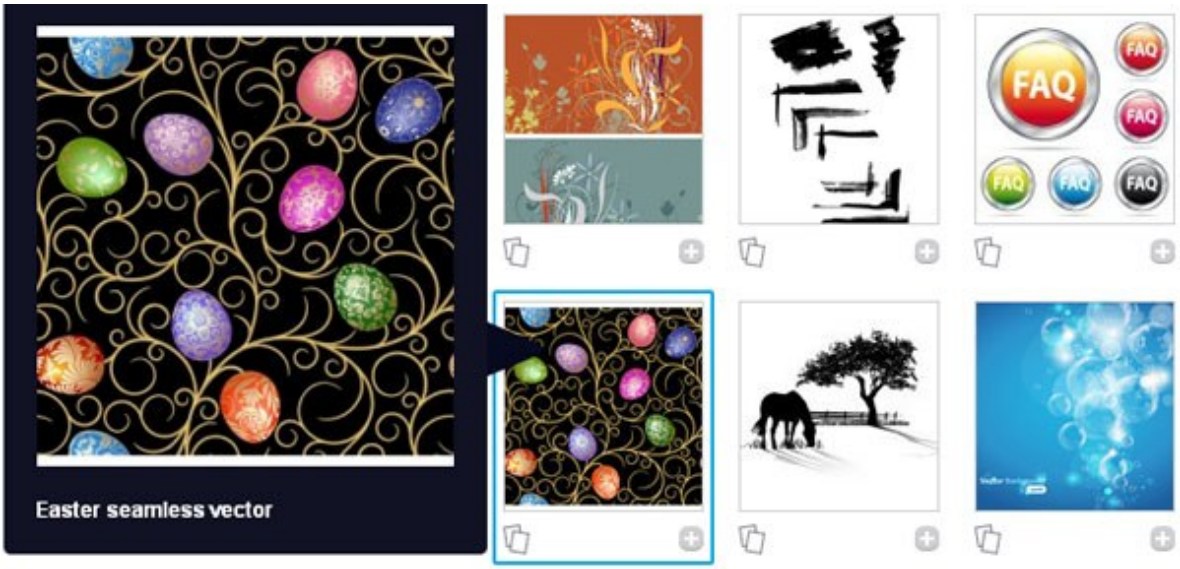
Thu, Nov 24 2011 15:58:51 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Every year, Autodesk sends a call to all users of its products for the possibility of being included in its yearly show reel. This year, you have until December 9th to submit your entry if you wish to participate, and the reel will be introduced in April at the NAB show in Las Vegas.

Sites where to sell your designs online

Wed, Nov 23 2011 23:28:17 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Designzzz published an interesting listing of sites where artists can sell their own photos, cliparts or designs. They cover both traditional, paid sites, and competition based sites as well. Check out this useful resource if you've ever wanted to sell your designs online.



Cinema 4D NitroBlast tutorials

Wed, Nov 23 2011 19:43:03 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The Pixel Lab released the first in a series of video tutorials on how to use NitroBlast in Cinema 4D, to create destruction nad break up 3D models. You can view the rest of the series on their Vimeo page.

VFX breakdown of Grounded

Wed, Nov 23 2011 19:33:27 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Kevin Margo posted a VFX breakdown video of the short film Grounded, in which he shows how many of the special effects scenes were done.

Creative online protests hit pepper spray products

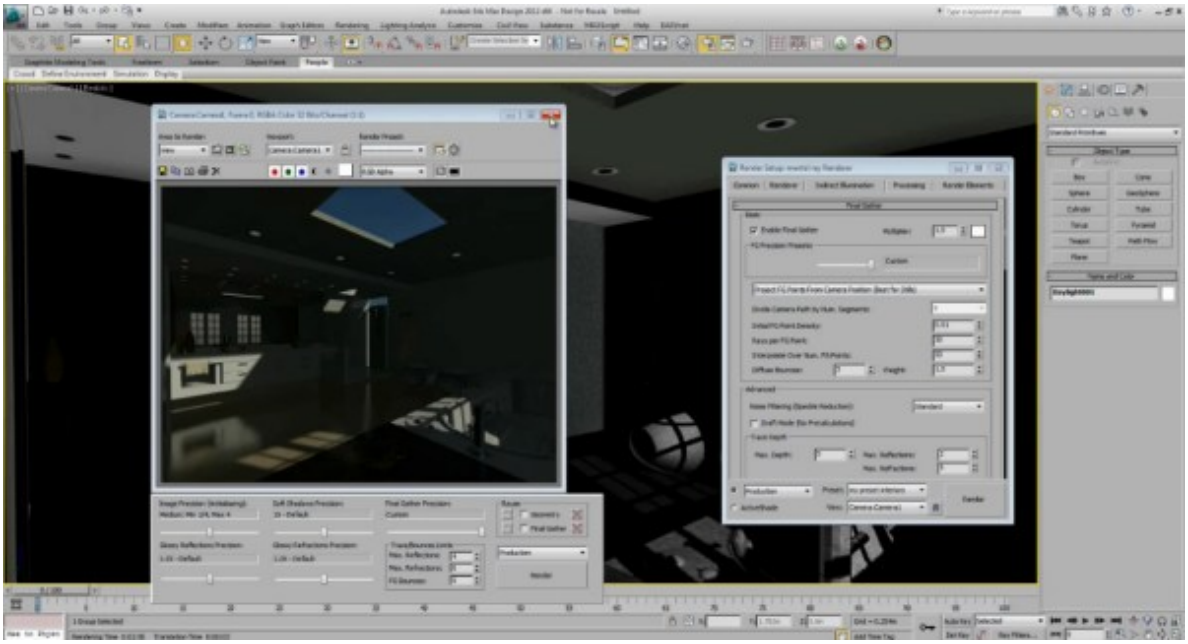
Wed, Nov 23 2011 19:23:11 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

With the ease of use and wide availability of digital creation tools like Photoshop, today's memes can be highly creative, like in the case of protests against the actions taken at UC Davis. For example, Amazon has been innondated with mixed media pictures showing the officer pepper spraying everything from the US constitution, to God himself. This kind of meme is likely far from over.

AutoCAD Quick Send to 3DS MAX

Wed, Nov 23 2011 9:16:25 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Autodesk released a new technology preview called **AutoCAD Quick Send to 3DS MAX**. It's a plugin that automates the workflow of transferring a project from AutoCAD to 3DS MAX, reducing the number of steps and potential mistakes created in this operation. The preview is available now and the company created a few videos showing it in action.



Artist showcase: BlackCatShooter

Tue, Nov 22 2011 22:57:56 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature Vincentius Yuna, also known as BlackCatShooter, a 17 years old digital artist from Indonesia.

the . blue . hearts

LOVE
YOU,
dear :*
With
Lots
of
Love

blackcatshooter@deviant

yesterday.

Risen 2 behind the scenes video

Tue, Nov 22 2011 19:13:06 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The team behind the game **Risen 2** published the first of a series of behind the scenes videos about the game. In the first one, they discuss how the world was created, how they took their inspirations by going to various locations, and show off some initial concept art.

Making of Amazon vs Sea Monster

Tue, Nov 22 2011 19:08:08 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Alexi Chabane, a digital artist from Canada, posted a quick tutorial showing how he made his piece **Amazon vs The Sea Monster**, going from the initial sketch, to character designs and various layers in Photoshop.

Design of free-to-play games

Tue, Nov 22 2011 18:56:09 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Gamasutra has an interesting series on the design of free-to-play games. It covers things like how to design for a market that expects virtual goods for free, ways designers can provide immediate satisfaction, and designing the game for new audiences. Free-to-play games also have other key concepts like being easier to use and have a longer duration. Finally, metrics also need to be closely looked at in order to make

such a game profitable.

New app to make panorama pictures on iPhone and Android

Tue, Nov 22 2011 18:38:48 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

While people recently found ways to create panoramas using the iPhone camera, a new app makes this even easier, and is available for iPhone and Android.

Phoenix FD 2.0 fluid dynamics tool released

Tue, Nov 22 2011 6:11:08 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

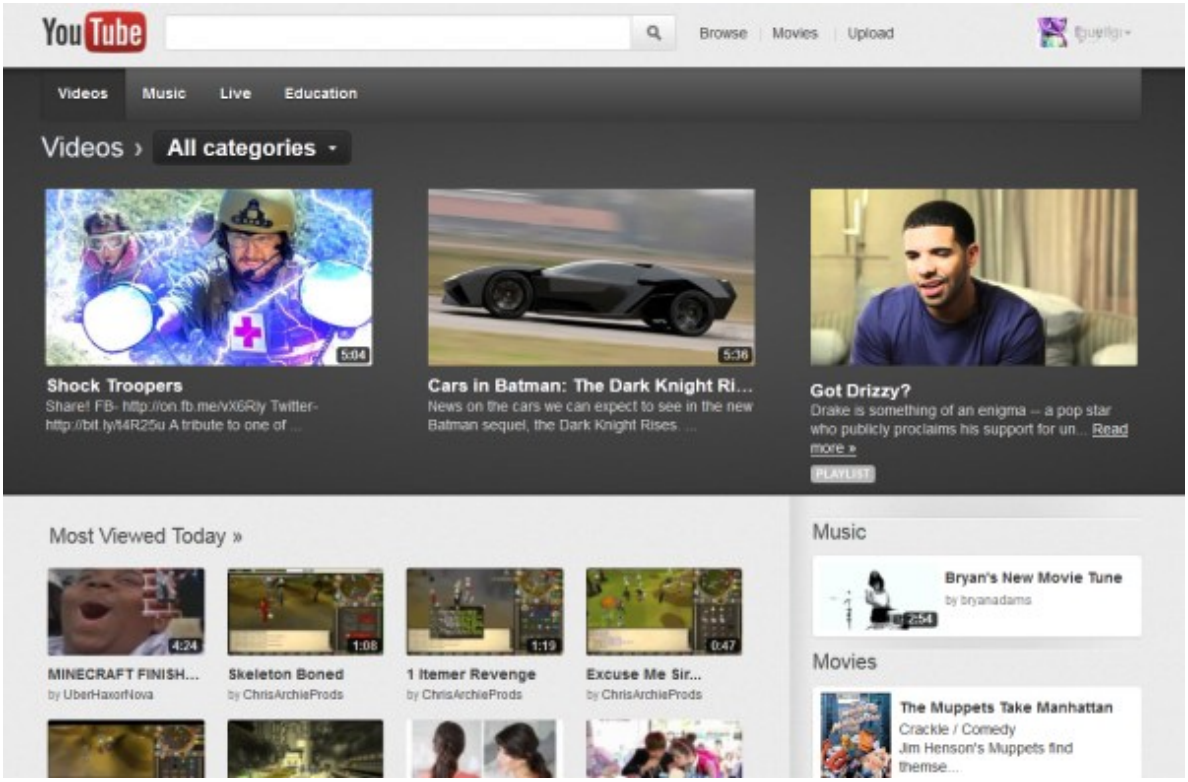
Chaos Group, the company behind the popular V-Ray renderer, released Phoenix FD 2.0 for 3DS MAX. This is their fluid dynamic tool used to simulate fire, smoke, explosions, liquids, foam and splashes. Some of the new features include a new particle shader, improved particle simulation, and GPU preview enhancements.

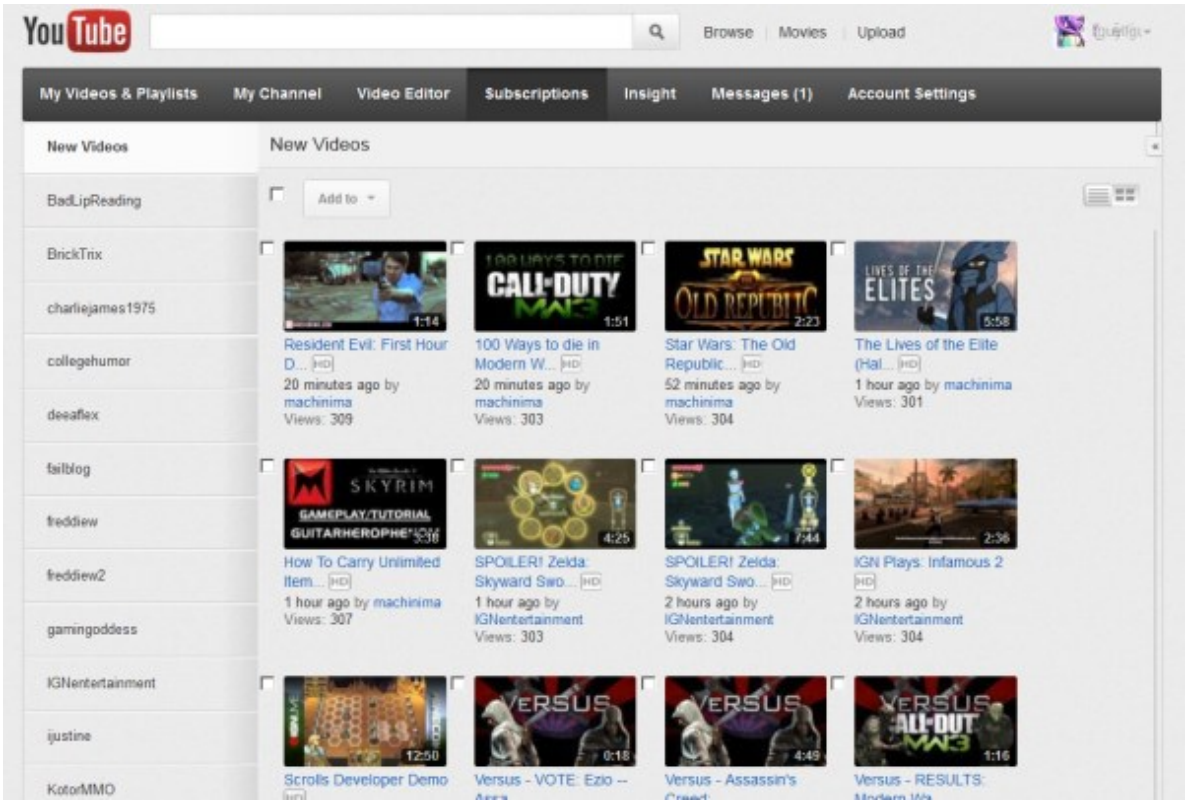
The group posted videos showing Phoenix FD 2 in action:

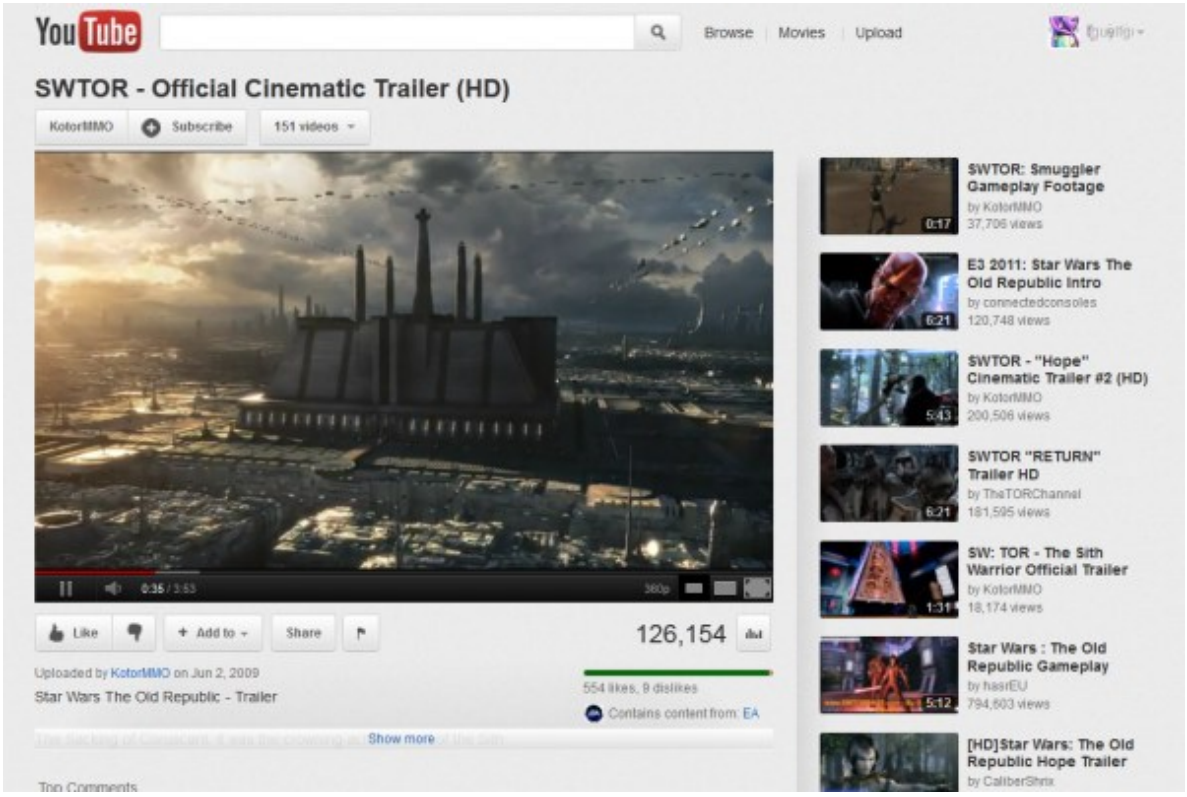
YouTube is about to launch a new look

Mon, Nov 21 2011 21:25:45 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

YouTube, like every other Google site out there, is being redesigned to follow their unified Google+ look. New buttons, more white space and redesigned pages are coming soon to the largest video site on the web. Here's what some of the pages look like. The differences aren't much, but they definitively made it more along the lines of other Google properties.







While the new design isn't public yet, thanks to Mashable we know of a workaround. If you use Chrome or Firefox, enter the developer console:

In Firefox: Ctrl + Shift + K (Win) | Cmd + Shift + K (Mac)

In Chrome: Ctrl + Shift + J (Win) | or Cmd + Alt + J (Mac)

Then type in:

document.cookie='VISITOR_INFO1_LIVE=ST1Ti53r4fU';

After that, reloading YouTube should give you the new design.

Desk of the future

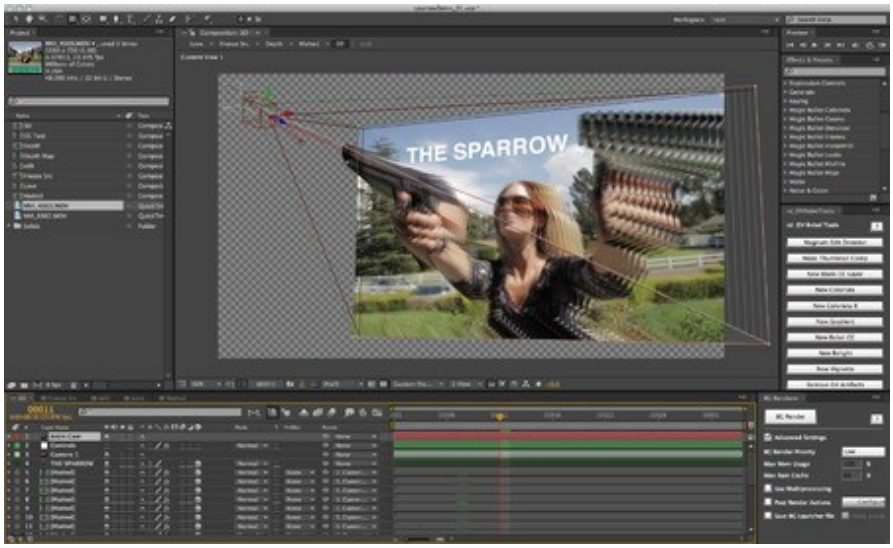
Mon, Nov 21 2011 21:13:38 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Could your future desk be your tablet, keyboard, and more? It seems, according to this video, the desk of the future will be very interactive.

Tweaking After Effects settings

Mon, Nov 21 2011 21:04:10 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Stu Maschwitz, a filmmaker and well known industry blogger wrote an interesting post about Adobe After Effects settings and what he tweaks to get better results out of the compositing software. This includes things like levels of undo, preview quality, project defaults, text preferences, scripts and more.



Behind Super 8 video

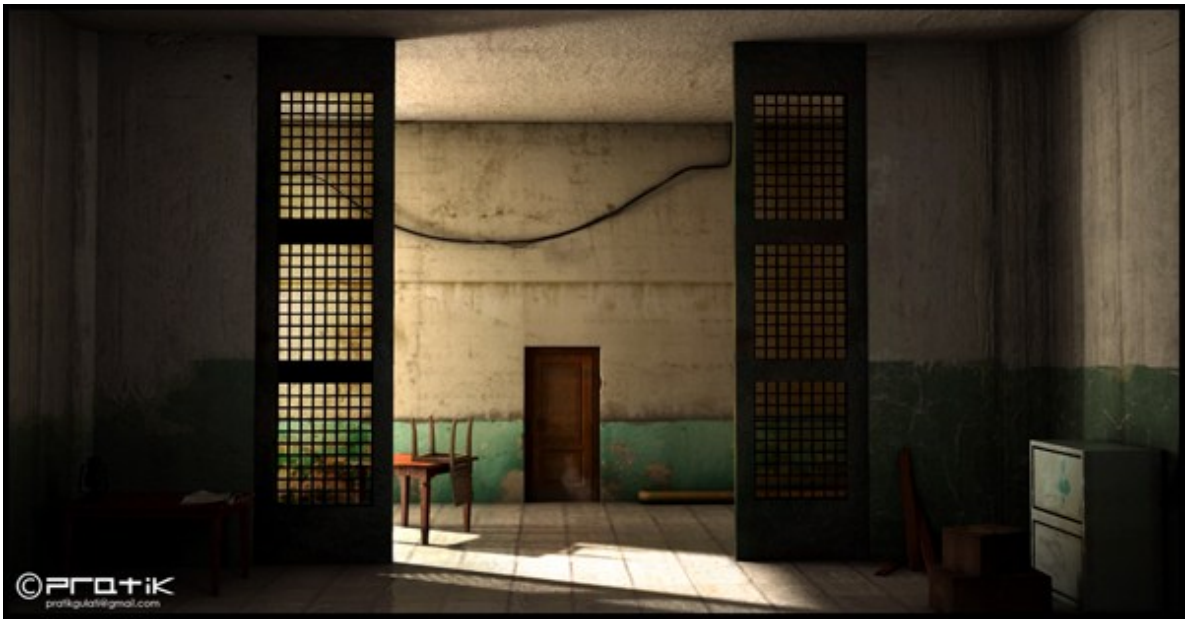
Mon, Nov 21 2011 20:50:12 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under videos

The producers behind the movie **Super 8** posted a behind the scenes video in which they talk about the movie, how the special effects were done, and showing some of the greens screen footage.

Interior scene lighting in Maya and Mental ray

Mon, Nov 21 2011 10:19:44 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

This morning Pratik Gulati posted a tutorial showing how to create realistic interior lighting in an abandoned lobby scene, using Maya and Mental ray. The steps go into details on the various settings for the lights and the render options to use.



Making medieval metal text in Photoshop

Mon, Nov 21 2011 10:14:00 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Abduzeedo published an interesting step by step guide to creating medieval metal text effects using Photoshop. With a few filters, you can get a fiery result that looks out of the old kingdom.

Artist showcase: nahp75

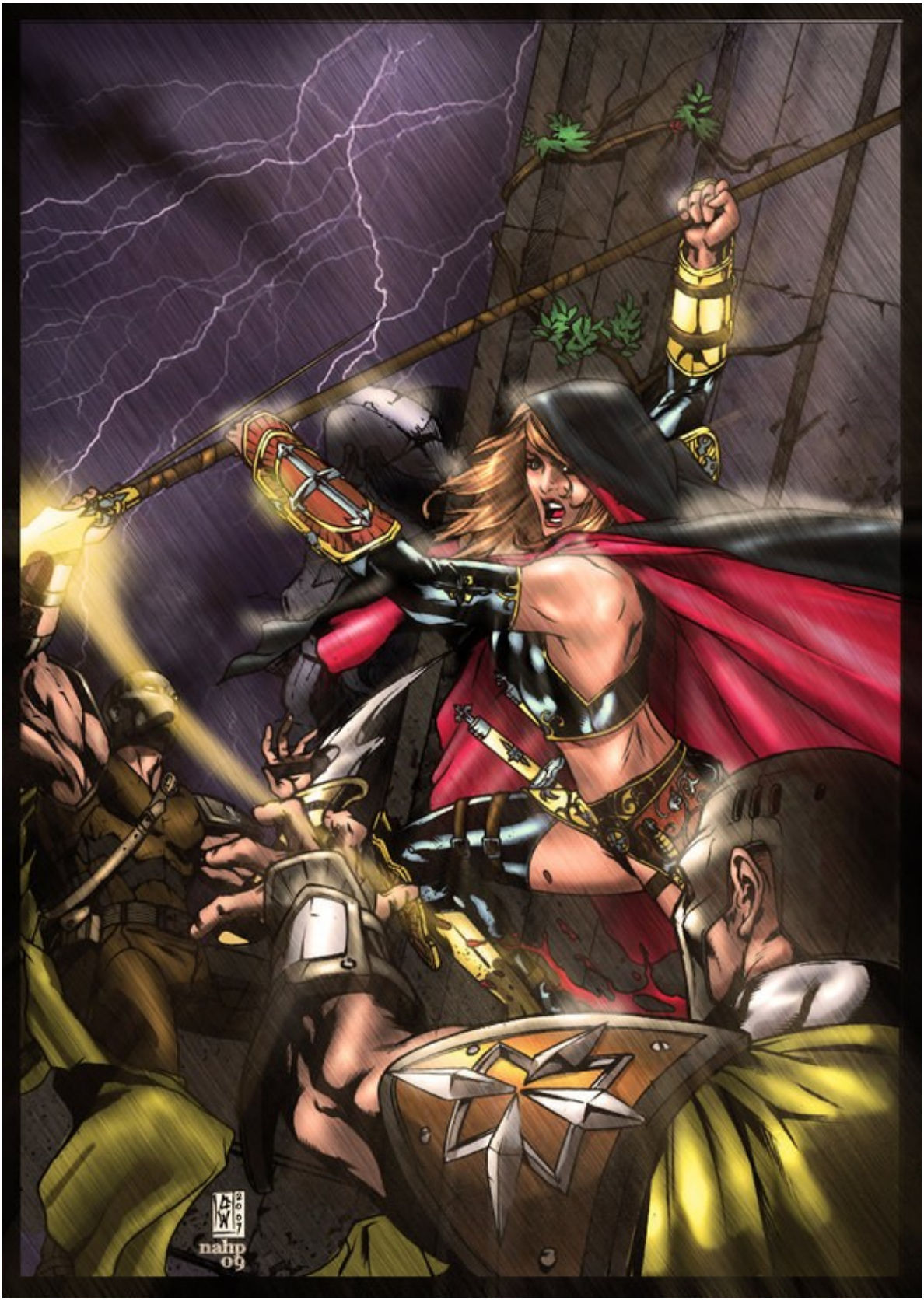
Sun, Nov 20 2011 20:36:46 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we feature the art of Stephan Lemineur, also known as nahp75, a french speaking artist from Belgium.

AFTER J CAMPBELL

Nahp
10

NAHP 09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Making an ultra realistic image in Photoshop

Sat, Nov 19 2011 21:49:10 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

In this tutorial, Jason Seiler talks about how he draws very realistic looking images in Photoshop, creating some very faithful representations of real life in Photoshop.

Making of God of War image

Sat, Nov 19 2011 21:43:14 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

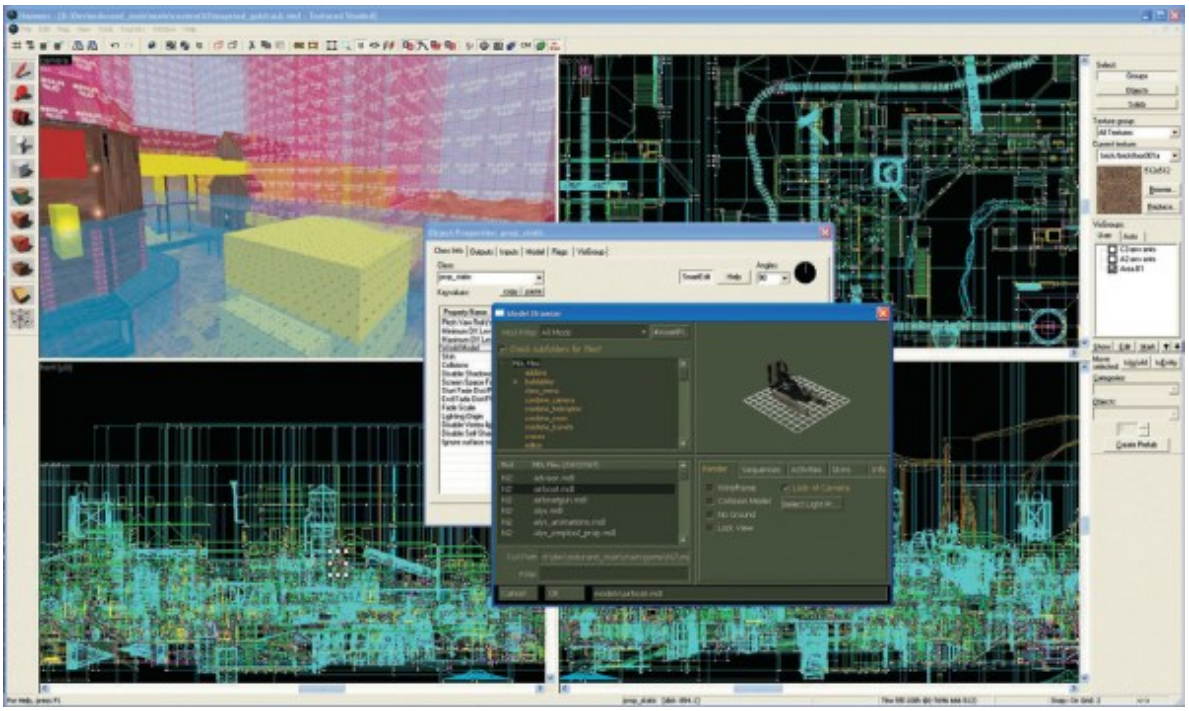
Markus Lovadina posted a tutorial showing the creation of his **God of War** contest entry, using Photoshop, from initial sketch to the finished product, creating a very striking image.

Top 5 free game engines

Sat, Nov 19 2011 21:34:26 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

If you're an aspiring game designer, or would like to see if it's something you would be interested in, then the best way to do so is by picking a game development platform and start playing with it. Here's 5 popular free (or at least free to start with) engines that you can try out.

Source SDK

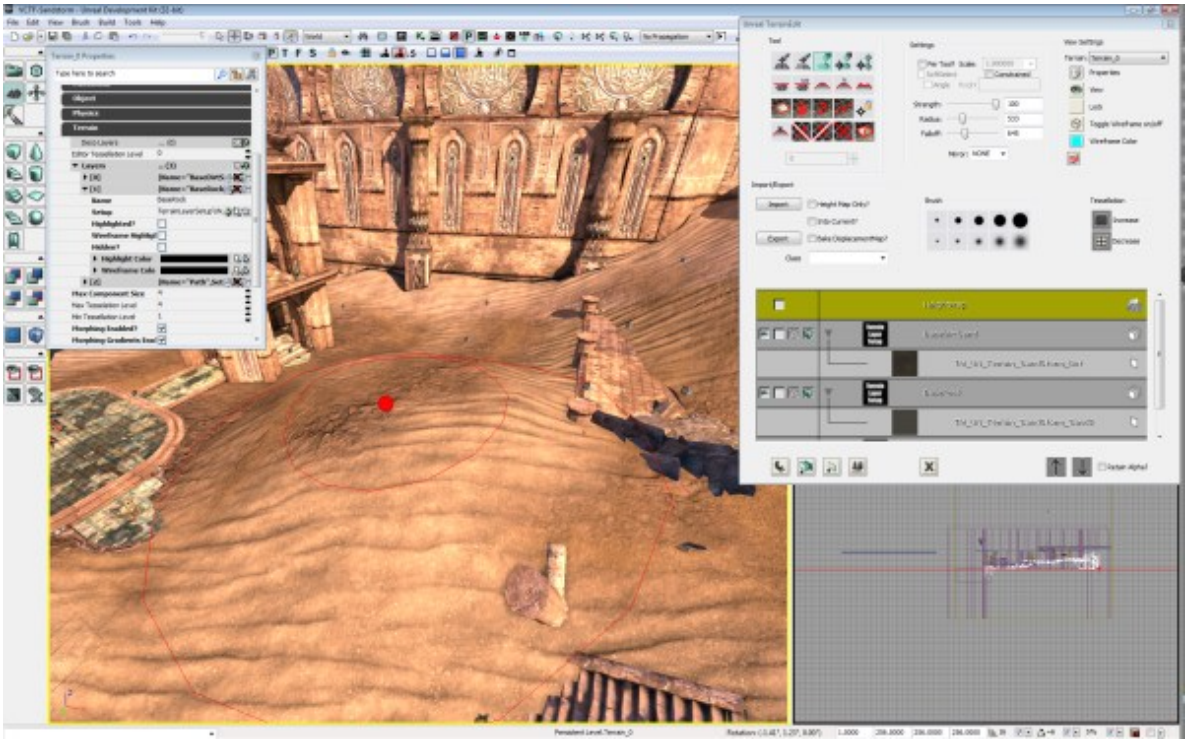


The Source SDK is the engine made by Valve Software and what powers all their popular games like Half Life 2, Portal 2, Left 4 Dead, and so on. It's one of the oldest engines still in use today, but the company has been updating it all this time. It's a good choice because you can get it for free by buying any Valve game, even if you download Team Fortress 2 (which is free) and it's available to you with all the needed

tools. Source is also used by a lot of mod creators, which is great because a good way to start designing games is by starting with making mods, levels, and so on, for existing games. Source makes it very easy to do so.

The engine is primarily made for first-person shooter games, and it's very easy to make a level using the Hammer Editor. But it's also been adapted to RPGs and other types of games as well. The engine itself supports all the latest features like HDR, dynamic shadow maps, rag dolls, a full facial animation system, and so on. The Wiki also provides a lot of documentation to get started with.

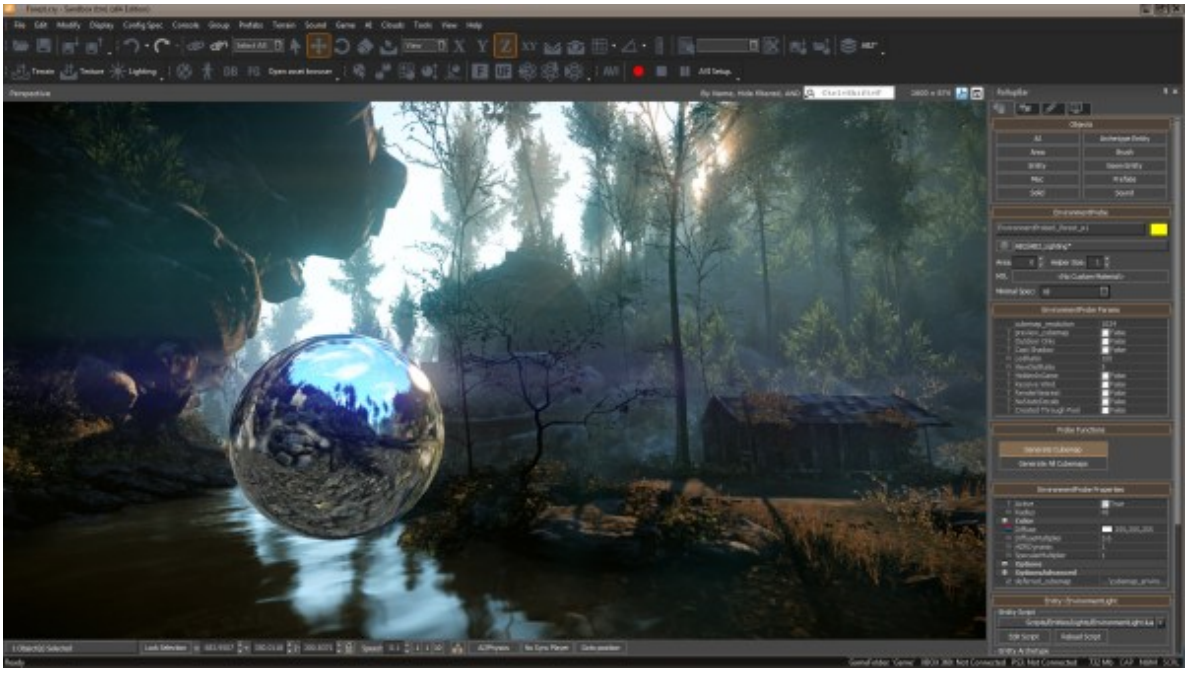
Unreal Development Kit



The Unreal Development Kit, or UDK, is another option to start playing with game design. UDK is great because it's one of the top engines used by professional games like Gears of War, Mass Effect and Bioshock, yet the company is providing the entire development platform for free to non-commercial projects. It also comes with a lot of popular Unreal Tournament maps so you can see how they were made.

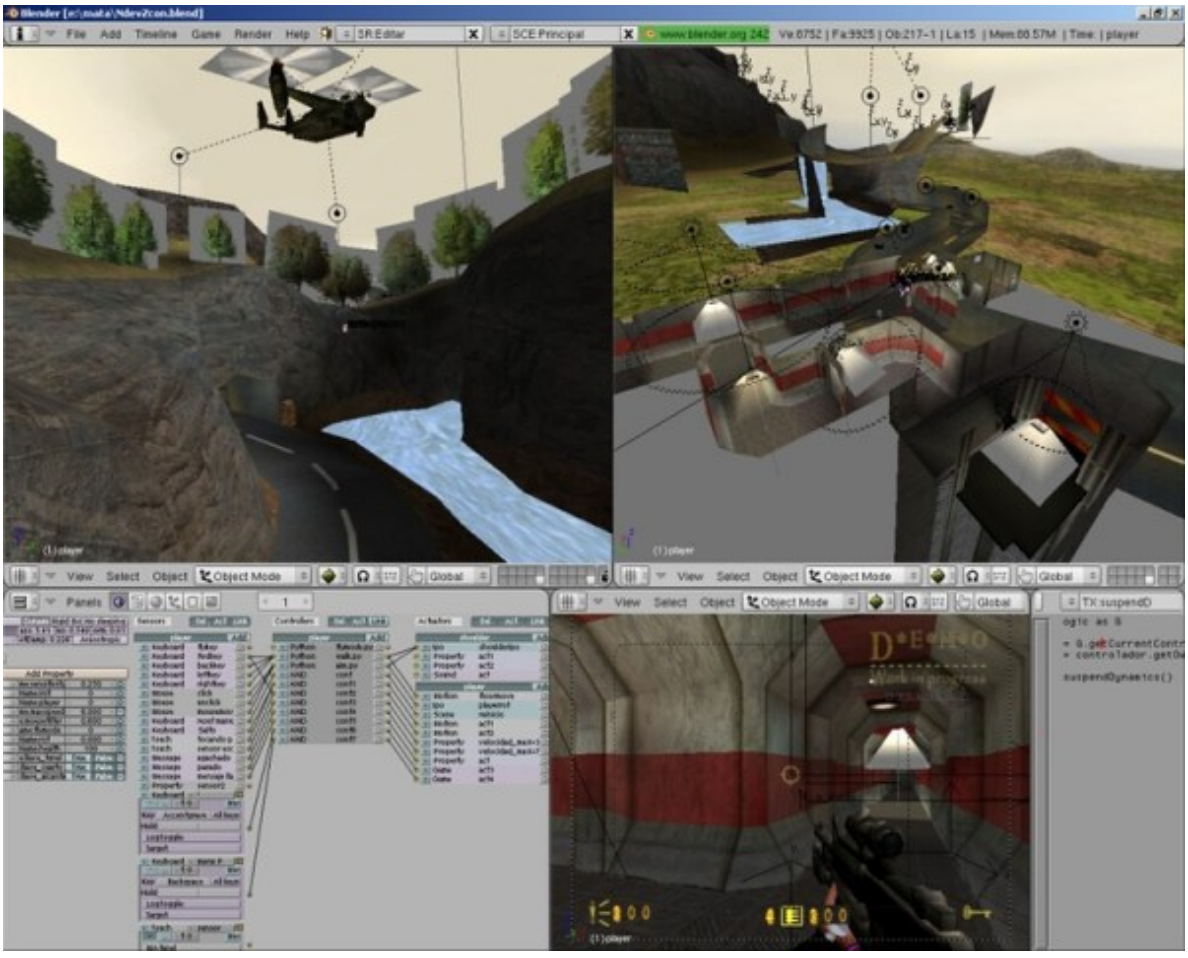
The engine has all the state of the art features, including complete environment editing, scripting, animation, physics, cinematics, particle effects, and more. UDK has also recently been ported to mobile platforms, so you can use the same tools to make computer, console and iPhone games.

CryENGINE 3



Following what EPIC did with the Unreal Engine, CryTek did the same thing with CryENGINE and made it free for non-commercial uses. It's similar in other ways as well. Since both companies compete heavily, their engines provide many of the same features. There's been many debates online as to which of the two is better, and no one came to a definitive conclusion. Certainly each has its strengths, but for a starting designer, they both are fine choices.

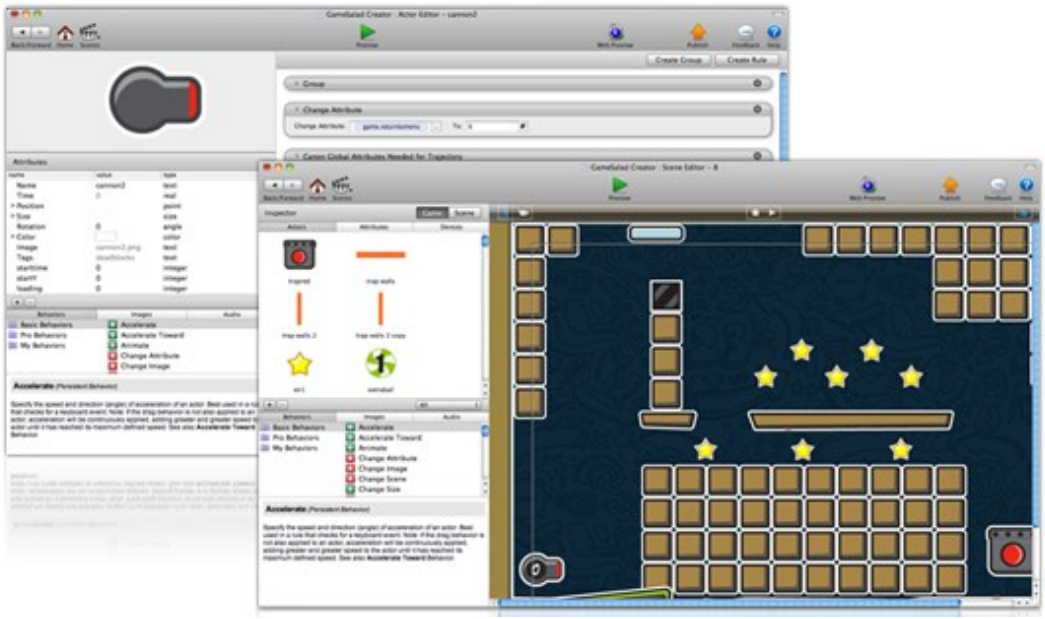
Blender



Blender is noteworthy because it's the most popular open source modeling application out there, but few people realize that it includes a full game engine under the hood. The benefit is that you can create your 3D models, and integrate them into the engine right there, in the same application. The negative is that Blender has a notoriously steep learning curve. Also, while it can provide fine basic 3D games, it lacks some of the advanced tools that the commercial engines provide.

Still, Blender has features like scripting, physics, collision detection, AI and vehicle dynamics. It also provides an audio toolkit. Blender can be a good choice for indie developers who want to stick with open source software, or don't want to pay a license for commercial games, which is required with any commercial engine.

GameSalad



So far we've focused on heavy-duty, 3D games using professional engines, but these days a lot of the innovation goes into lighter, more casual friendly games, published on multiple platforms. GameSalad is an HTML5 game creator that provides easy publishing to the web, iPhone and Android marketplace. Even though it's using web technologies, it can create some surprisingly complex games, and has been used by thousands of successful games in the various App Stores.

The main features of GameSalad include an easy to learn dashboard, automatic publishing on multiple platforms, drag and drop, physics, and a large library. It's available for free to start with, then they provide with various plans depending on where you want to publish.

Immortals behind the scenes

Fri, Nov 18 2011 20:55:31 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Last week the producers behind the movie **Immortals** published a behind the scenes featurette, talking about some of the design decisions made for the film, and showing some of the mo-cap and green screen footage.

How to create a great artist web site

Fri, Nov 18 2011 20:49:16 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Artists these days have plenty of places to publish their art online. From social networks, to online galleries, we've covered these a while back. But the fact remains that you don't actually own any of those sites. They can, and do change their policies and features all the time, and while one day you may think it's enough to publish on a specific site, the next it may become something you don't want to be associated with anymore.

Facebook, with its constant privacy policy changes, is a good example of that. Every artist should have his or her own web site, because it's not complicated and can be free to do. But when it comes time to build that site, here's some tips that can help you make a great looking one.

Making a great site

First, pick a platform you'll be happy with, and that will be around for a long time. Going with WordPress is a good choice, because a majority of blogs out there run on it. You can get a free blog on their hosted service, and then pay for extra features you may need. There are a lot of themes out there to customize your web site with, and many plugins to add functionality. Some paid services make it even easier to build and customize a site, like SquareSpace, but for these you need to pay upfront.

Regardless which host you pick, and whether you make your own site, or have someone do it for you, here's a few tips to start off. First, don't do Flash. Too many artists in the past decade have handed out their site building project to someone who made the entire thing in Adobe Flash. That's bad for many reasons. First, the site is completely unreadable to many people, including anyone who doesn't have Flash, anyone on an iPhone or iPad, and any blind person with a screen reader. You can create a great looking site without having to rely on it. Instead, use up to date standard technologies like HTML5. If you don't know coding there's plenty of tools out there for it, some of which don't require you to learn much at all about coding, or again you can pay for a site builder so you can do it all on the web.

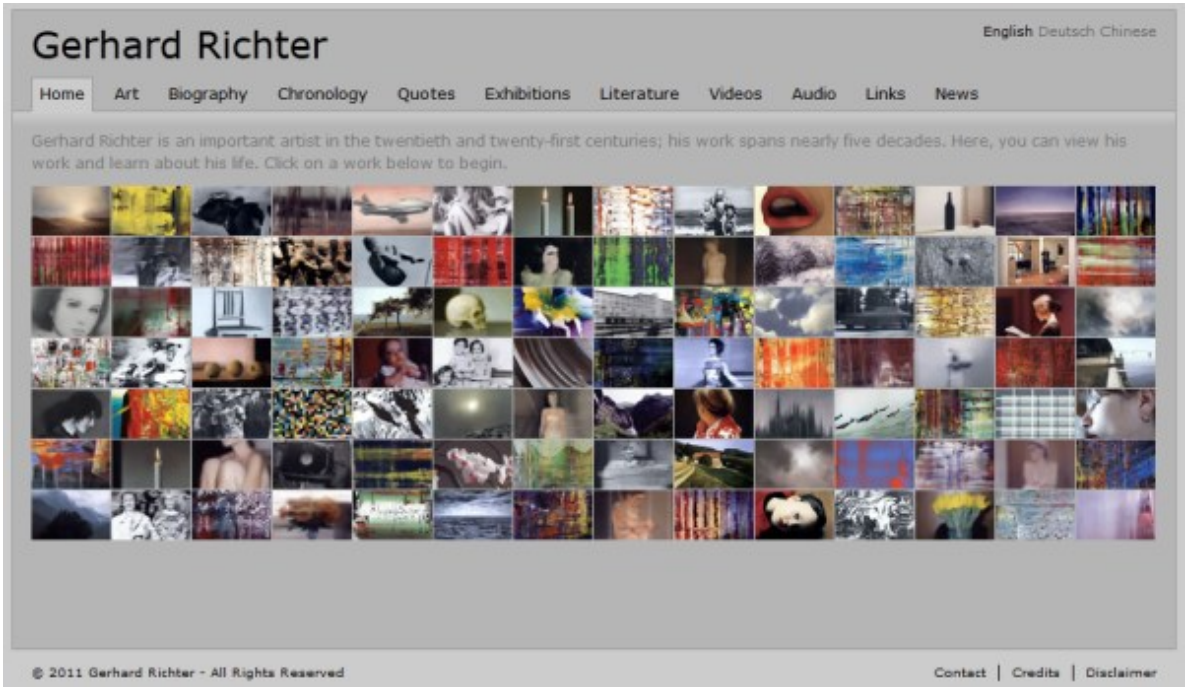
As for the visual design itself, remember that the same rules apply here as for ads or newspaper stories. What matters most is the first impression. People need to know by looking at your web site for 5 seconds exactly what it's about. That means you need to have a clear, visually appealing, and simple to navigate site. Too many designers try to cram a whole lot of information on the front page of their site, and it hurts them, because it takes longer for the average viewer to find what they're looking for.

Another tip when it comes to design is to use a navigation that people know. Side menus, or top menus, is what most sites do. Trying to be original by having an image reveal the various parts of the sites, and needing the viewer to click on objects in the scene to access other pages, can work in some ad campaigns, but can often be confusing enough for people to just leave and go to the next site instead. Worse, many sites lack basic pages like *what is this site about*, and *how can I contact the author*.

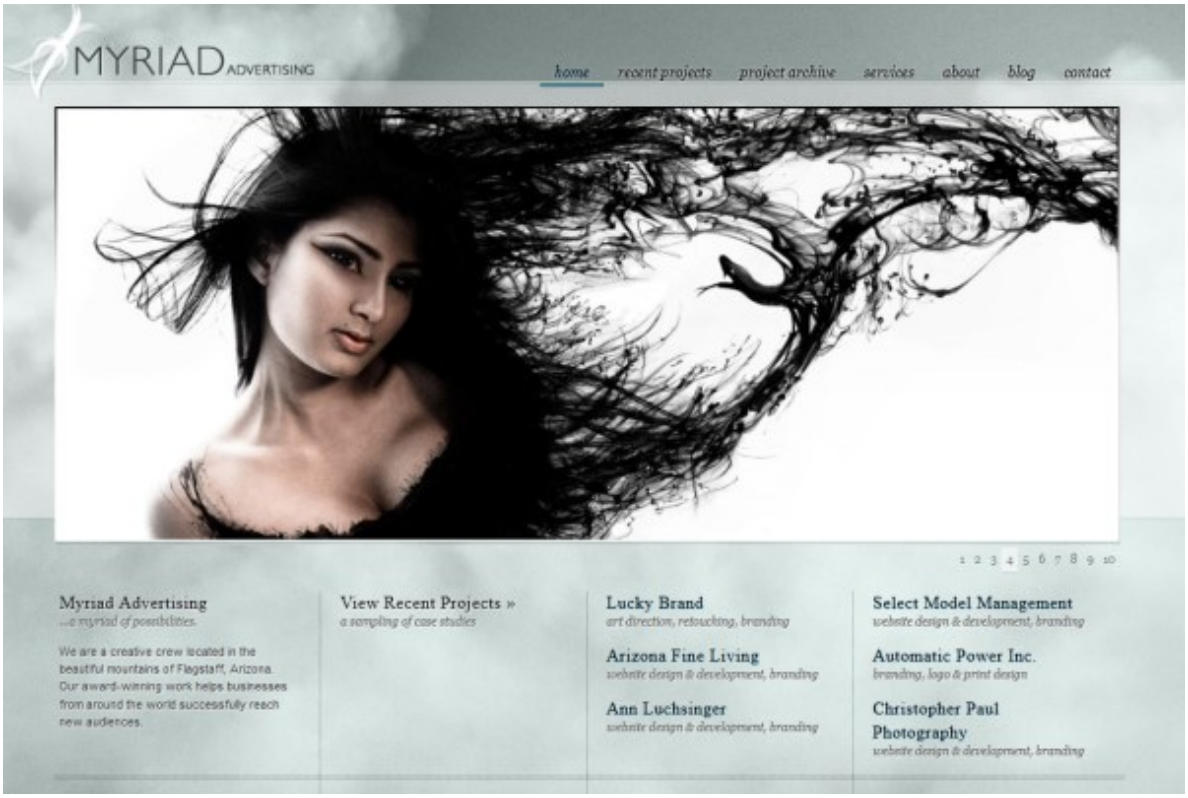
Site examples

I feel there's nothing better to illustrate these points than looking at examples. Here's a few sites I picked just because I liked their design, and to show what artist sites could look like.

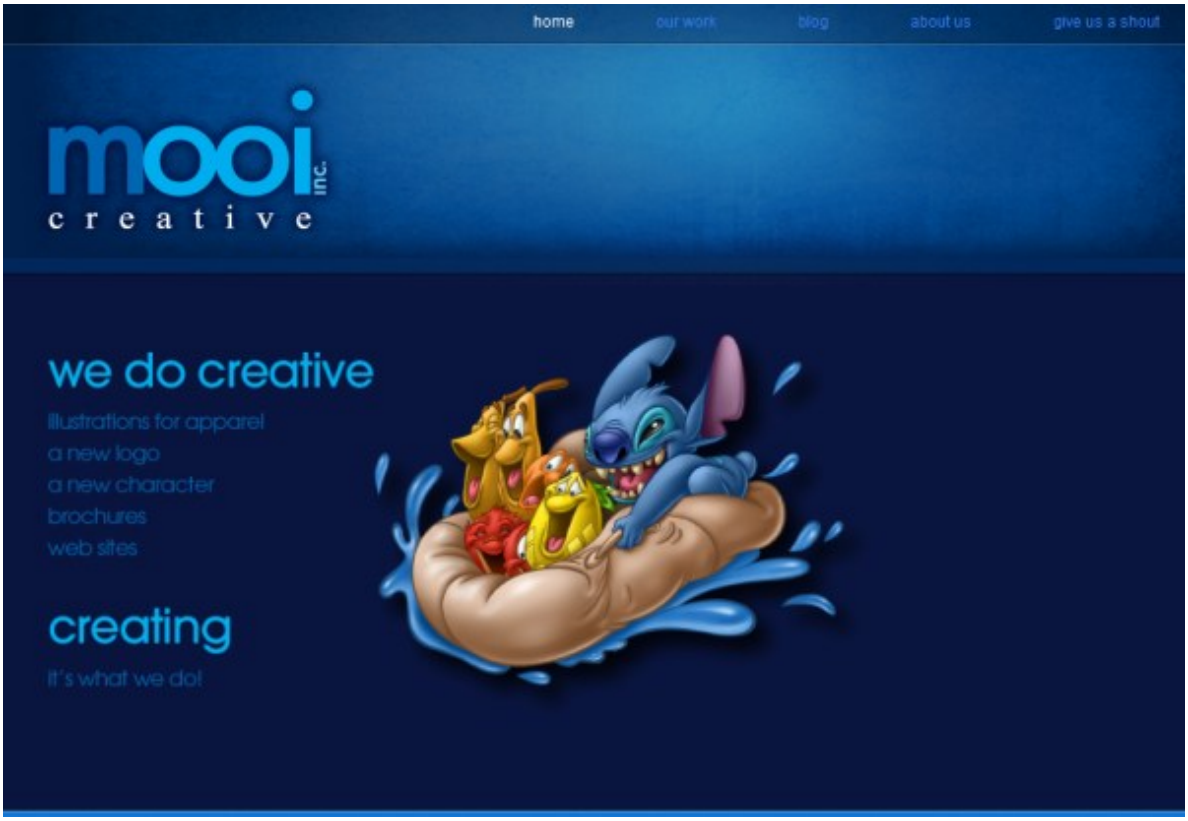
This is the site of Amber Jean, and the home page is very typical to what an artist web site could look like. There's a large picture, a clear side navigation bar, the name of the person is showed in clear, big letters, there's sharing buttons to all of her social network presences, and the overall design is appealing. It's not crowded, in fact it's very minimalist, but it brings the message home in a couple of seconds. Then, should someone want to read her blog or see contact information, they can click through to those pages. Also note that the menu isn't static, it has animation features, yet it's all done in HTML, not Flash.



Here's the site of Gerhard Richter. Instead of one large image, he picked a lot of small ones. What I like about it is that the site is very consistent. All the pages are contained within the top navigation menu, and the whole site is branded in the same way. It's easy to navigate and professional looking.



This is the site of an ad agency, and again focuses on a large image. Instead of having a section that lists their various samples however, they have the large image scroll through various ones. This can work as well, as long as the content is easily understood by the viewer. The whole design is very professional.



And finally to contrast with the last example, it's not necessary for the site to be corporate looking. Using bright colors, cartoon characters, and text that's fun and light can work, depending on the message you

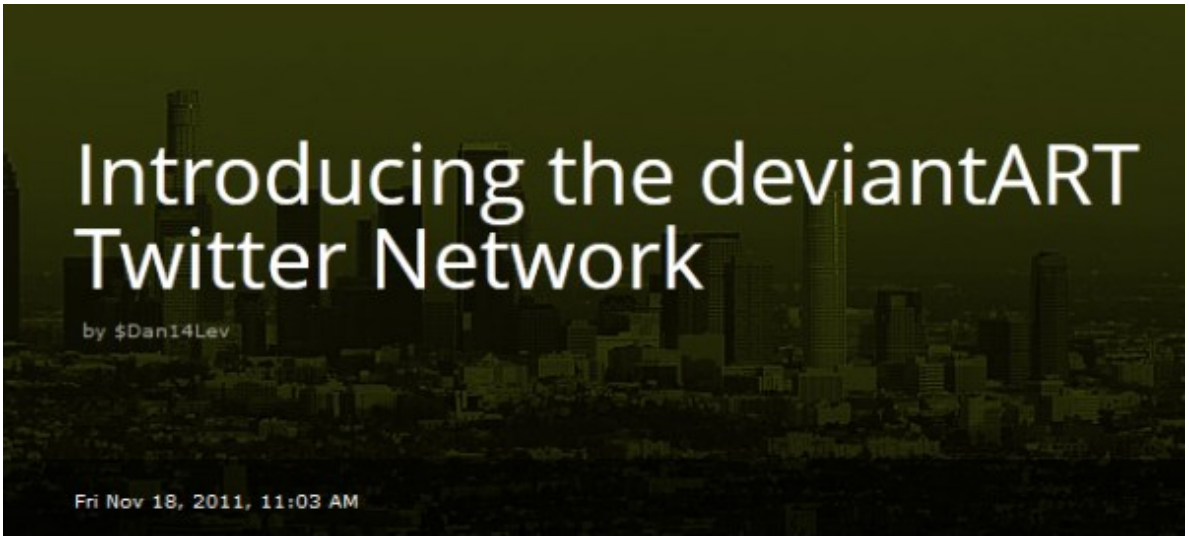
want to send.

It's up to you to decide the kind of site you want, but hopefully with these tips and examples you now have a better idea of what's available out there, and what result you want to get.

DeviantART Twitter network

Fri, Nov 18 2011 19:58:35 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Artists now have yet another avenue of inspiration with DeviantART introducing today the DA Twitter Network, a series of automated Twitter accounts that publish new popular art in specific categories.



The accounts are:

dA_digital for digital art

dA_photos for photographs

dA_traditional for traditional art

dA_comics for cartoons and comics

dA_fanart for fan art

Art design of Final Fantasy XIII-2

Fri, Nov 18 2011 10:44:17 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

This week, Isamu Kamikokuryo, the Art Director on **Final Fantasy XIII-2**, talked to GameTrailers about the art design that went into the game. One of the major concept that was adopted throughout the development of the game was to create a darker environment as opposed to the previous games in the series, which are typically brightly lit and with a lot of light colors. Since the environment is created first, one of the early challenge was making sure it would look familiar to the players, while still conveying that darker feel.

Characters also needed to be brought up to par, and their growth needed to be shown from the previous games. For the character of Noel, his whole design was created based on his personality, someone who is always forward thinking, always fluid, and his costume also fits well with the outfits other characters wore in previous games. Any time a new character like that needs to be made, they break down who the character will be, before deciding what the design will look like.

As for character customization, while the online Final Fantasy games allow players to customize them, for offline games they have no plan yet to allow this, because the story is set around these characters. Cinematic events have also been improved, and now the system allows players to influence what happens in them.

Final Fantasy XIII-2 will be available in January 2012.

Wacom Inkling review

Fri, Nov 18 2011 10:23:05 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Earlier this year, Wacom introduced the Inkling, a digital pen that allows you to digitize anything you sketch on a piece of paper. Mashable today published a comprehensive review, where they put the device to the test. The bottom line is that it's a very good device, that delivers what it promises. However, at $199, it's a bit on the expensive side, and artists may instead opt to stick to a pen and paper.

DevCon 5 topics announced

Thu, Nov 17 2011 20:25:00 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

DevCon 5 is the conference for HTML5 developers and web designers to meet and talk about the future of online publishing, to find new ways to create interactive web sites, do online creative thinking, and advance web standards forward for the next generation. TMC and Crossfire Media, the hosts of the conference, announced the panelists that will be talking at the conference.

The speakers at DevCon 5 include:

Paul Trani from Adobe who will delve into CSS3 & advanced design, as well as talking about transitions in animation.

Charles Jolley from Facebook will host a keynote discussing why HTML5 trumps device operating systems.

Jan Linden from Google will answer the question as to whether specific devices decline or change as a result of HTML5.

Zhenyao Mo from Google will give an update from the WebGL working group and give a walkthrough of one of the leading WebGL content engines.

Neil Trevett from Khronos Group and NVIDIA will highlight the visual side of HTML5, and show how Web GL is guiding the development of HTML5 platforms.

Jonathan Stark from Mobiquity will host a keynote about simplifying the relationships between customer and employee using HTML5.

David Kaneda from Sencha will share his views on the best ways to maximize development efforts using HTML5.

Ryo Shimizu and Eric McEver from Ubiquitous Entertainment will talk about the goals of HTML5 and Enchant.js.

Carl Ford from Crossfire Media will take the audience through the best examples of HTML5 on the Web.

DevCon 5 will happen on December 7-8 in Santa Clara, California.

PowerDirector 10 released

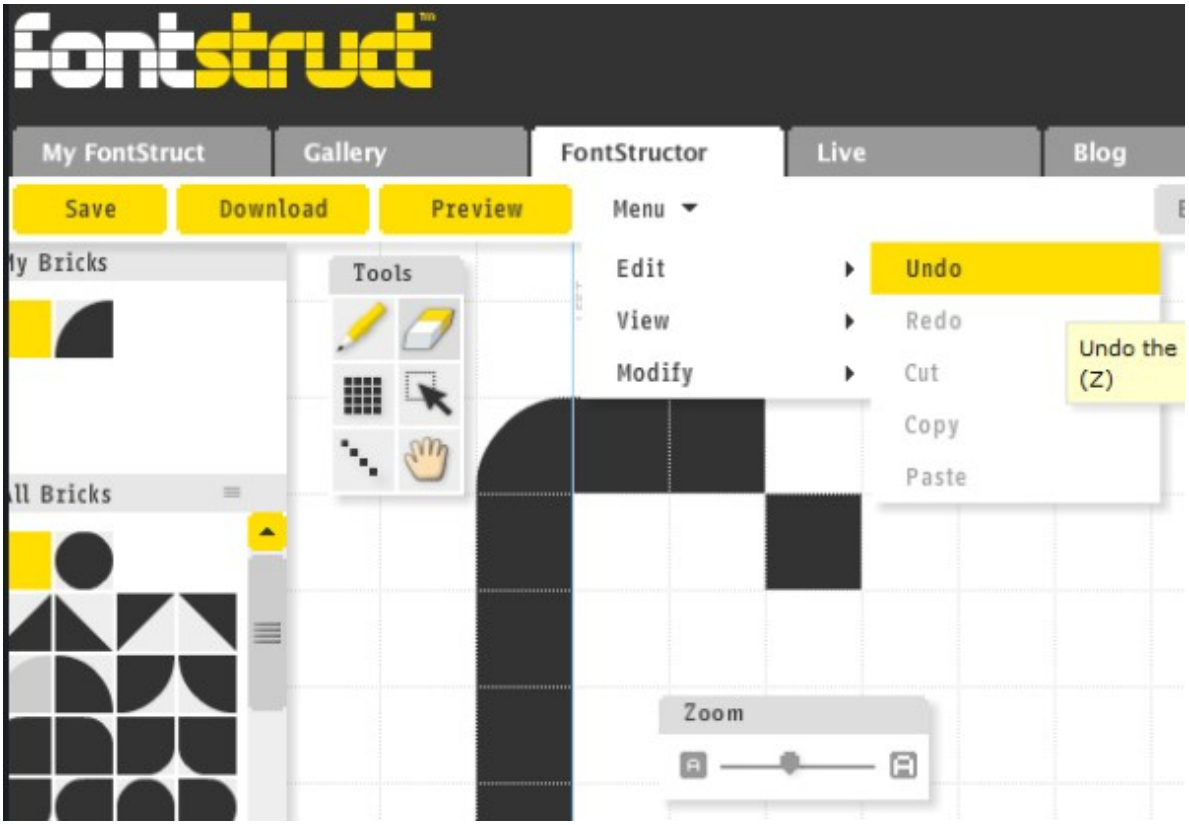
Thu, Nov 17 2011 18:39:06 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

CyberLink today announced the latest version of its video editing software, **PowerDirector 10**, along with a pro-quality version, **PhotoDirector 2011**. This software allows photo and video editing at a much lower price than traditional high end solutions. Some of the features include high speed and performance thanks to TrueVelocity, full HD editing tools, 3D support, one-click fixes and over 200,000 free effects. The new version is available now for $99.

Free font creation tools

Thu, Nov 17 2011 18:24:20 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Have you ever been looking for a new font without finding just the right one for the job? Mashable has a nice article compiling 7 free tools for designers to create their own fonts. It covers both web apps and native apps that can provide you with just the right font for your needs.



Gears of War 3 rigging video

Thu, Nov 17 2011 11:09:56 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

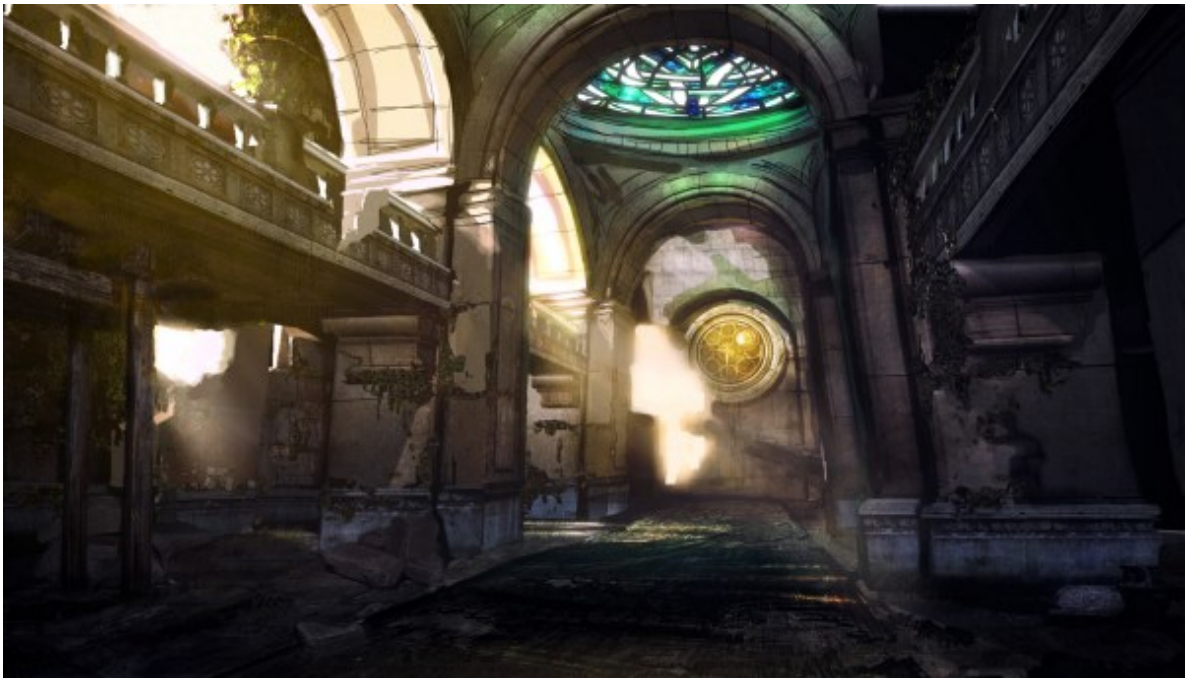
Jeremy Ernst, a designer from EPIC working on **Gears of War 3**, posted a behind the scenes video showing how he did the rigging on the game characters, along with text commentaries. A very informative view for game artists.

How Infinity Blade 2 uses new iPhone 4S technical features

Thu, Nov 17 2011 2:06:42 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Geremy Mustard, Technical Director behind **Infinity Blade 2**, talked with GameTrailers about some of the

new features that iOS 5 and the iPhone 4S offers them, and how they can impact the design of new games. One such feature is realistic light rays, something that he says was just recently introduced in console games like Gears of War 3. Thanks to the technical innovation of the iPhone 4S, including a faster processor, that visual effect is something that will be fully implemented in the game.



Another feature he talked about was iCloud, which allows games to send over save files across devices instantly, using Apple's cloud storage network. A player could be in the middle of a match, put the iPhone down, and a few seconds later pick up an iPad and keep going exactly where he was, without the need for syncing. This is a major bonus for games to use.

Finally, Infinity Blade 2 will also take advantage of the asynchronous communications available in iOS 5 to bring world encounters, where every player everywhere will have the opportunity to fight the very same mob, with millions of hit points, and contribute to killing off the massive creature, with rewards going out to all players who participated in the encounter. This would have been very hard to do with traditional network code, and the new iPhone 4S makes this kind of feature much more available.

Infinity Blade 2 was first shown off during the iPhone 4S presentation and will be available at the start of December.

ZBrush 4R2b announced

Thu, Nov 17 2011 1:21:17 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Pixologic, the company behind ZBrush, announced ZBrush 4R2b, an incremental upgrade that will be made available for free to all current ZBrush users at the end of December. There's no saying yet what new features or bug fixes will be included over the existing ZBrush 4R2 features, but it's a good surprise nonetheless.

Tesco shows products in 3D

Thu, Nov 17 2011 1:09:42 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under videos

In yet another way to distinguish themselves using online technologies, Tesco designers have started to implement a new feature on their web site that allows customers to see products in their own homes, in 3D. They published a video showing the feature in action.

American Censorship Day

Wed, Nov 16 2011 21:54:55 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Today is an important day on the Internet for all Americans as Congress debates on whether to implement a national firewall, in the same way that countries like China have their own well known censorship procedures implemented. The American Censorship Day is a response by many companies and organizations in order to get people to speak out against the proposed law, which would force all Internet providers to block all foreign websites suspected of infringing local rules, without due process and no appeal. While some Hollywood lobbyists are pushing for this, it would certainly impact creative expression online, and cause a chilling effect on many.

Happy Feet Two behind the scenes video

Wed, Nov 16 2011 21:44:59 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

The producers behind **Happy Feet Two** posted a fun featurette showing behind the scenes footage, where you can see actors playing the role of penguins, and how the animation moves were captured.

Making of Silent Monk

Wed, Nov 16 2011 21:25:03 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Sergey Musin posted an interesting tutorial on the making of **Silent Monk**, a digital painting using ZBrtush, Maya and Photoshop.

Making of Constantinople in Assassin's Creed

Wed, Nov 16 2011 12:32:19 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In a new behind the scenes video, Ubisoft developers talk about how they created the city of Constantinople for **Assassin's Creed: Revelations**. the video talks about going on site in Istanbul, taking both photo references and audio clips, and then recreating the whole town in 3D.

Behind the scenes of Vestel commercial

Wed, Nov 16 2011 10:58:44 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under videos

Alex & Steffen posted an interesting behind the scenes video of their commercial for **Vestel**, featuring a fighter jet, a robot and a lot of special effects. See how they integrated the shots filmed at an air base in Istanbul with green screen footage.

Autodesk talks about creative solutions

Wed, Nov 16 2011 2:44:13 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under videos

In a fairly unusual video, Autodesk CEO Carl Bass talks about the kind of work people do with Autodesk products, and the results that they feature in their gallery, to showcase some of the high end solutions that were created with their suite of apps.

Artist showcase: Sakimichan

Wed, Nov 16 2011 0:38:41 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to feature the digital paintings of Sakimichan, a female artist from Canada.

Art(c)sakimichan.deviantart.com

Art(c)sakimchan.deviantart.com

ART(C)SAKIMCHAN.DEVIANTART.COM

art(c)sakimichan.deviantart.com
art(c)sakimichan.deviantart.com

art(c)sakimichan.deviantart.com

黒執事
Art(c)sakimichan.deviantart.com
Art(c)sakimichan.deviantart.com

Cat videos taking over the advertising world

Tue, Nov 15 2011 23:17:24 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under videos

Ad agencies spend most of their time trying to find new, innovative ways to advertise. One digital design firm had the idea to make a mock presentation about cat videos taking over the ad industry, and it went viral with over 340,000 views in less than a week. It's reminiscent of the Kittywood Studios video from earlier this year which capitalized on cat videos to produce a fake all cat video production company.

Dreamworks CEO wants to animate the web

Tue, Nov 15 2011 21:46:50 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Dreamworks CEO Jeffrey Katzenberg spoke at the Techonomy conference yesterday and said that in his opinion, the web is too text centric, and needs more graphics and animations. According to him, *''Text is a learned process, but what we do at Dreamworks is intuitive and instinctual, and you do it from the moment*

you are born. We're trying to see if we can move many of these things we can do today in text but moving up to video and audio, do it with sight and sound." Apparently, Dreamworks has been working with Intel for years now and in 2012 it will start pushing 3D technology on the web. There was no detail as to how this would be implemented, or how it would transform the web, but he seemed confident that it would make the whole Internet a more visual place.

Supermoms web series to feature Clorox cleaning products

Tue, Nov 15 2011 21:35:30 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

With seemingly every production company embracing online delivery, RedLever Studios announced today a new web series called **SUPERMOMS** that they produced in collaboration with Clorox. The unique feature however is that instead of looking at getting a large publishing firm to finance the project, the series partnered with the cleaning company Clorox, and will center around many of their brands including Liquid Bleach, Clean-Up, Glad Trash Bags and Fresh Step Cat litter. The story line was developed by both the studio and sponsoring company, which means it's sure to be filled with targeted advertisements.

The 8 episodes will focus on 4 women in their everyday lives, but also the uncommon responsibility of being super heroes working together to foil their arch-enemy, Dr. Deconstructo. The cast includes Joey Lauren Adams, Julie Warner, Brennan Hesser and Lourdes Benedicto. Is this the next viral YouTube web series, after the very successful Old Spice videos, or will it come off as tacky and overly promotional?

Supergiant Games talks about the production of Bastion

Tue, Nov 15 2011 21:21:27 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Supergiant Games, a small 7-person indie games developer, talked with Gamasutra about what it's like for a small company to publish their first game, and get a publisher, especially when they have their own IP. They decided early on that they didn't want to give up control, and received no money from Warner Bros, who ended up publishing **Bastion** earlier this year.

Also, the team conducted a community Q&A earlier this month where they answered fan questions:

Looking back, what aspects of the game do you feel could have been done better? There really isn't much I would change. A couple of the Proving Grounds proved more frustrating to some players than we intended (e.g. Hammer and Pistols), so in hindsight we probably could have made those a bit more forgiving. But then, other players enjoyed the challenge.

Were you really surprised how much of a fanbase Bastion has generated? We were cautiously optimistic that people would like it though there was really no telling how it would go over for sure -- so yeah, we're surprised and happy. We did want to make something that could leave a strong impression so it's great to see it's done that for a good number of people.

How did you come up with so many awesome lines of narration/dialogue? It took a while...! It helped having a story outline to work from and a deep backstory that I'd written out. That way we could build a level from scratch and I could align it with some aspect of the backstory or some aspect of the fiction. Every sequence of the game was meant to add some dimension to the world of the game and the

narrator's persona.

What was one of the biggest challenges you faced and how did you overcome it? We were an unheard-of little studio trying to make a splash with our first game. We managed to get it into the PAX 10, which turned into a great opportunity to get the word out. We pushed as hard as we could to get the game to a great place for that show, so that we could hand over the controls and let the game speak for itself. That got us a lot of attention and good feedback.

What's next for Supergiant Games? Too early to say what's next though we're sticking together and intend to press on, which is just what we wanted. We didn't announce Bastion until more than a year into its development so it'll probably be a while before we talk about anything new.

How long it takes to create art

Tue, Nov 15 2011 20:52:32 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

DeviantART asked on their Facebook wall how long it took people to create a single artwork, and why. The results were pretty interesting, with many people saying it took them around 2 days to 2 weeks. As for why, some of the quotes that reflect what most people said are: *''rearranging never stops'', ''I always get new ideas and the old things fall to the side'', ''too many ideas at once'' and ''it had too many details''.*

Adobe touch apps released on Android tablets

Tue, Nov 15 2011 9:18:18 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Last month, Adobe announced a series of new tablet apps to provide artists with ways to keep creating even on a touch platform. The company today released those 6 apps on Android tablets, in the Google marketplace. According to Adobe, they are best used on 8.9'' devices running Android 3.1 or above. They're available right now for $9.99 each. The iOS versions will be forthcoming in early 2012.

Interview with creator of forger iPad sculpting app

Mon, Nov 14 2011 23:28:04 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Javier from Double Negative, talking about forger, a new iPad 3D sculpting app he created.

Can you briefly describe yourself?

My name is Javier and I am currently working at Double Negative as a Pipeline TD. I started doing 3D when I was still in high school and continued ever since. I consider myself an artist even though I studied computer science.

I looove sculpting things (digitally) at home, I don't see it as a job, I have fun doing it, like any kid would drawing on a piece of paper. (of course this can only be seen like this at home and without deadlines or production!)

What is forger and what are the main features of the app?

Forger is a sculpting app for the iPad, I think that its main feature is that it is being developed from a modeler point of view, and not from a programmer, so when I plan to add features I add those features that I would use (and I do use) when I am sculpting, that results in a richer feature set.

How does it differ from the other modeling apps we've seen recently on the iPad like 123D Sculpt and iDough?

I think that each app is great at what it's focused on, my app is more thought for professionals or aspiring CG animation/vfx/game artists than 123DSculpt or iDough. It expects users to know up to a certain level or at least have used some desktop sculpting app to some extent, so they can understand what certain features do, and when to use them.

This is definitively not a good ''business decision'' since this closes down the potential customers market to

only the people in the industry or the people who want to be in the industry, and after that, take only the ones interested in modeling out of all disciplines and take only a 5% that might have an iPad, that is my target audience.

Like I said, not a smart business decision, but at the end of the day I am trying to write an app that I would like to use, not my mom. So I try to add everything that I feel that I need and I don't try to oversimplify things or stupidify the user base.

Was it hard to make, what kind of experience did you have with XCode and other iOS languages?

I am really happy because I think that I've learned a lot while doing it. I did have the experience of studying computer science, and I know my fair bit of C/C++ and OpenGL, but to put things into actual use and to prepare a project of the scale of this project is something that you can't learn in a class. It's also the mistakes you make and the design errors (that only you see) that makes you better. So I guess that it wasn't easy, but I don't want to say that it was hard, as if this was hard I don't want to know how are the planned features going to turn out to be!

How long did it take you to create it?

I wrote a really rough version of the app for the iPhone to use as a Tech Demo around three years ago when the iPad wasn't out yet, I wrote it in one month and a half straight, by then I was about to finish university and I had nothing else to do, so I was literally working on it 24/7.

Around a year ago, and after having lots of workmates encourage me to finish it, I decided that I would continue to work on it if the technology was ''ready''. I did some initial tests sketching out things in ZBrush and I tried loading my ''worthy'' lowpoly sculpts into an old version of the app running on an iPad to see if the framerate was acceptable and it seemed to be good enough, that's when I started to work on the app.

It has taken me so long for two reasons, the fact that I decided to rewrite everything from scratch planning things out better and I wrote my own underlying drawing engine, as the first time I was using a game engine under the hood (note that drawing engine does not mean renderer) the other is the fact I don't have much time left for myself at the end of the day, but it kept me going, the fact that even if no one liked it, I would still like it and use it, because I love to sculpt!

What makes the iPad great for this type of app?

I think that the fact it's portable and you don't need like a zillion devices to start sculpting, if you are in a train or at the airport you can just take your iPad out of your sleeve and just start sculpting there. I do that in all my flights and I totally lose track of time. You could attempt to do the same carrying a laptop and a separate tablet, or even a tablet PC, but it really isn't the same, trust me.

How has the user feedback been so far?

The user feedback has been incredibly amazing so far! Everyone seems to like it a lot, and it really makes me happy seeing how much people like it after all the time and effort that went into it!

Can you talk about some of the upcoming features you'd like to put in forger?

I really don't like to talk much about upcoming features, mainly because this is not my main job and everything depends on how much spare time I get when I am away from work, and even after work the amount of time I can invest doesn't depend on me entirely, but I would like to say to the current customers that I have major plans for it, and if I get the time I will implement them.

For now I can talk about some small/not-so-exciting features like being able to tweet screenshots directly from the app, sync documents with iCloud, email OBJs, a reworked interface and that there are obviously plans for an iPhone version possibly as an universal app.

But all of these features are considered really tiny stuff that have nothing to do with the ''major plans'' that I repeatedly keep on saying.

Any plan for other apps?

In the process of writing this app I have made another app (a source code reader) just to help myself, it has really helped me and every time that I travel I go through some parts of the code of forger looking for

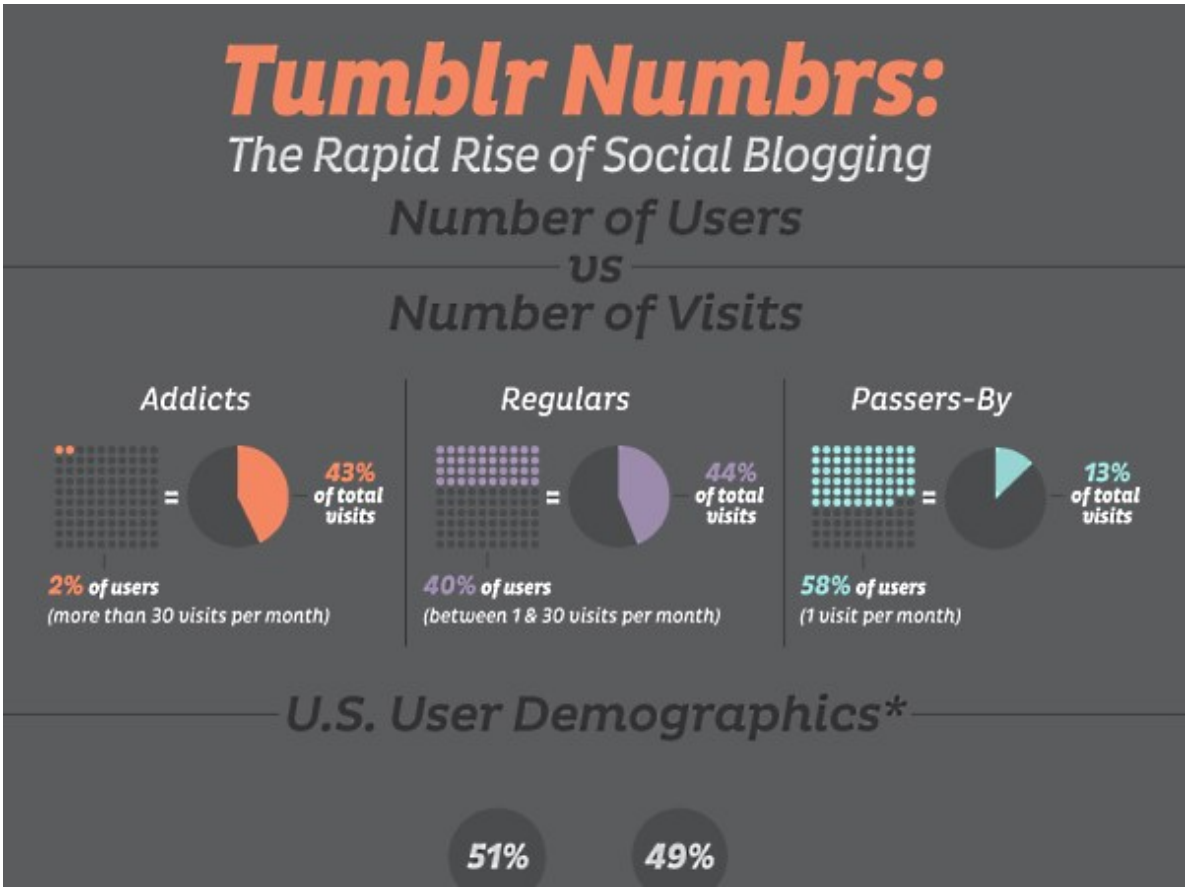
further optimizations (that's when I am not sculpting on forger!) But at the moment I don't want to invest much time on it (I only add the features that I need, as I need them)

I do have other plans, to write some other apps, but I have everything on hold as I would like to focus all my time and effort into forger now. I would definitively like to code a game some day with some nice graphics as I rarely find good 3D graphics on games for iOS/Android which really annoys me, but well...

Tumblr's impressive growth as a media sharing site

Mon, Nov 14 2011 20:24:50 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Mashable published some stats about Tumblr and its impressive growth as a media sharing platform. Among the stats divulged in the infographic, we find that users put up 38,000 posts per minute, and 42% of the original posts are pictures, making it one of the most visual social networking site out there. It's also one of the fastest growing one, with a 218% growth in a one year period from June 2010 to 2011. With $800 million dollars of valuation, Tumblr has a presence all over the world.



Dead Wringer Photoshop tutorial

Mon, Nov 14 2011 20:09:46 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

*Arnaud de Vallois posted a tutorial showing the creation of **Dead Wringer**, a scary looking 2D painting using Photoshop. It shows every step of the process from the original sketch to the finished image.*

ROSA

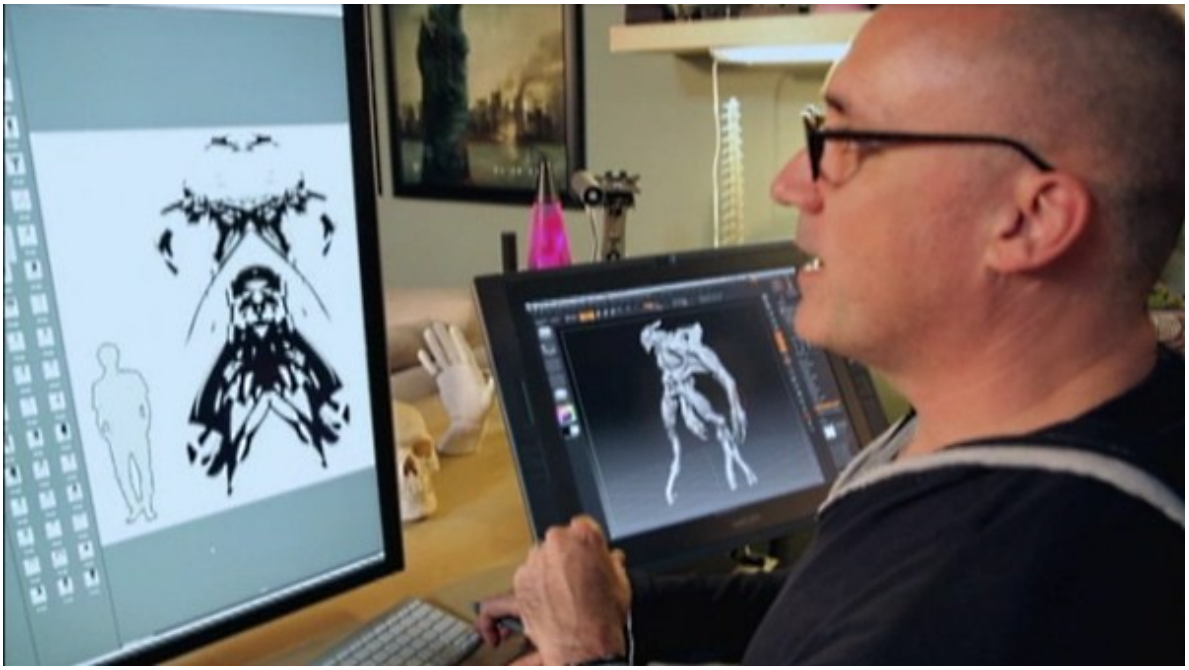
Mon, Nov 14 2011 18:31:17 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under videos

After several trailers, Jesus Orellana finally released ROSA, a 10 minutes long fantastic looking sci-fi animated short.

J.J. Abrams on Super 8 alien

Mon, Nov 14 2011 18:27:56 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

*WIRED has a video interview of J.J. Abrams and Neville Page on how the alien creature was designed and created in the movie **Super 8**. In it, the director speaks about the concept he wanted, and shows off some early sketches.*



24 hours of Flickr photo sharing

Mon, Nov 14 2011 18:18:03 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

While everyone is moving to the digital world, Erik Kessels, a visual artist in Amsterdam, decided to show in the real world what 24 hours of Flickr sharing looked like. He decided to print out every photo shared on the Yahoo! owned sharing site during one day, and ended up with a huge pile. It's now on display at Foam as an exhibit.

Erik says ''We're exposed to an overload of images nowadays. This glut is in large part the result of image-sharing sites like Flickr, networking sites like Facebook, and picture-based search engines. Their content mingles public and private, with the very personal being openly and un-selfconsciously displayed. By printing all the images uploaded in a 24-hour period, I visualise the feeling of drowning in representations of other peoples' experiences.''

The exhibit will be on show until December 7.

Filter Forge 3.0 released

Mon, Nov 14 2011 18:06:10 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Filter Forge is a 2D texture creation software using procedural functions, and works both as a standalone program and a Photoshop plugin, allowing artists to make seamless diffuse, bump and normal maps. The latest release, version 3.0, came out today, and is available from their web site, along with a trial version.

Some of the new features include:

***Progressive Preview**, a real time low resolution preview window that updates automatically as you work the texture.*

***Load multiple image sources** in order to have many sources for your functions to create the texture with.*

***Bezier curves**, with a curve editor allowing you to edit them.*

***Improved user interface**, along with a flexible window that can be rearranged for a better workflow.*

***Edge detector component** to help detect edges in an image.*

Making a hologram in After Effects

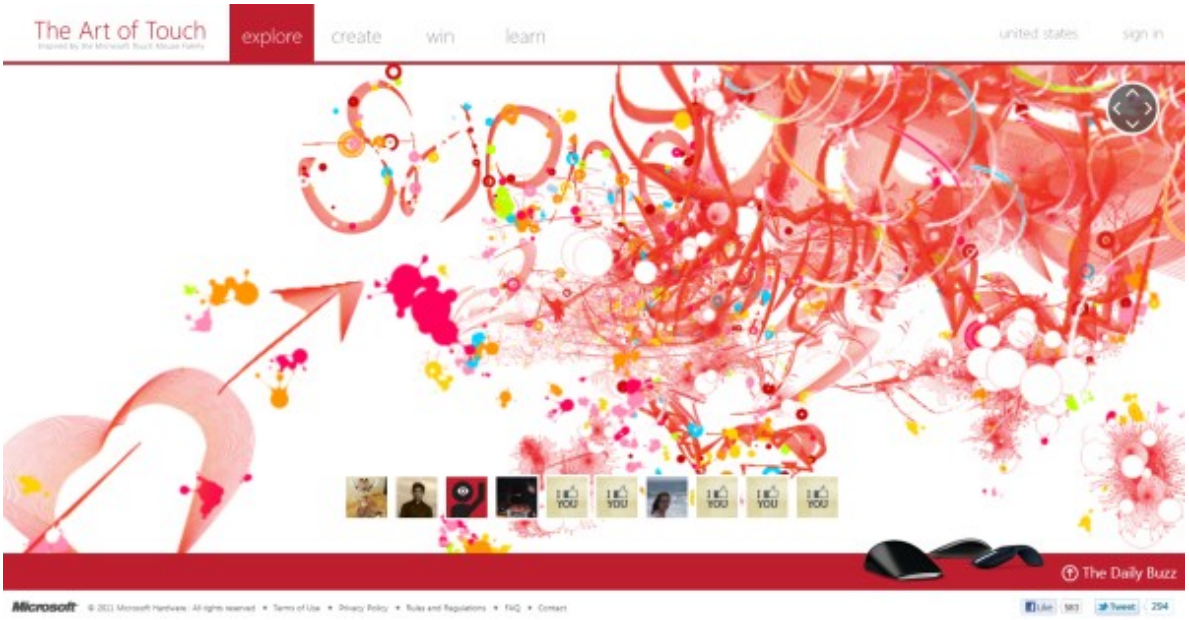
Sun, Nov 13 2011 20:15:29 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Mike Gentilini posted an interesting video tutorial showing how to create a 2D and 3D hologram in a scene by using Cinema 4D, Boujou, Mocha and After Effects.

The Art of Touch by Microsoft

Sun, Nov 13 2011 19:22:30 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

In a somewhat unusual marketing promotion, Microsoft created a site called The Art of Touch, which is a giant art canvas using HTML5, where anyone can use a few basic drawing tools to add ink to the virtual master piece. According to Francois Ruault, director of Marketing at the company, ''We're using art as a way to transcend technology and make people truly come back to the essence of what a mouse should do - empowering them to navigate their favorite content, express their respective talents and bring them out to the many.''



The project aims to advertise Microsoft's touch based displays, mice, and eventually Windows 8, which is designed with touch in mind. The app itself offers 3 drawing tools and 10 special effects, and is hosted on special servers running Microsoft's WPF, which recreates the drawn pieces to 1280x690 pixels resolution. Every meg of data generated during the drawing process is streamed to those servers in the background and aggregated into a single raw representation of the art piece. The AJAX code then mixes all of the drawings from everybody into a sea of art, formatting it for any browser resolution.

The site is also social, with viewers able to vote for individual drawings. Prizes will be awarded every week, and the person who gets the most votes by December 31st wins the grand prize. Microsoft collaborated on the site with artists Marius Watz, Erik Natzke and Dr. Woohoo! The company calls this project a collaboration between human and computer.

Vue 10 feature videos

Sun, Nov 13 2011 19:05:43 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Vue 10 was released a few days ago, and CGRecord pointed us to some videos that E-On Software posted that show some of the new Vue 10 features in action.

The problems of digital storytelling

Sat, Nov 12 2011 21:09:05 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under videos

At the TED conference this week, Sierra Zulu talks about the problems of story telling in the digital age, how to make a movie that tells a story with current technologies, and how he feels cinema doesn't have the same impact when telling stories about data, networks and computers.

Artist showcase: Cushart

Sat, Nov 12 2011 19:26:15 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're happy to feature another great 2D character artist, Cushart from Taiwan.

Detail 1
Detail 2
KRENZ's ★ ARTWORK ALACRITY
blog.yam.com/Krenz 091117

KRENZ's ★ ARTWORK
blog.yam.com/Krenz
GARDEN
090702
Detail 1
Detail 2
Detail 3

DRAGONFIRE
090123

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Illustrator: Krenz
0 8 0 2 1 3
CUSHART'S ARTWORK
http://album.blog.yam.com/Krenz
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Detail 1
Detail 2
Detail 3
KRENZ's ★ ARTWORK
NEW-HORIZON
WWW.THE-NEWHORIZON.COM

Science and ink

Sat, Nov 12 2011 19:08:35 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

In another example of science coming together with art, the New York Times has a slideshow of science and ink, people getting scientific tattoos, expressing their love for science using art.

Behind the scenes of Last Train

Sat, Nov 12 2011 19:00:15 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

*Animation Hub published a video showing the behind the scenes view of their latest animation, **The Last Train**. In it, you can see a lot of the concept art, how the VFX was done, along with 3D models. Interesting watch for those into 2D and 3D animations.*

Hulu, Netflix, 400 magazines available for Kindle Fire

Sat, Nov 12 2011 18:53:34 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

In yet another proof that digital magazines is where publishers see the future, as the new Kindle Fire gets ready to come out, Amazon announced that over 400 magazines will be available on the device, including all the popular ones, in full color, some of which with a 3-month free trial.

Earlier this week Amazon also announced Hulu, Netflix and other popular digital media services would be available on the device, taking the competition head-on with it's new Kindle Fire in the realm of digital publishing.

Interview with Nightshift3D

Fri, Nov 11 2011 22:30:41 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with Nightshift3D, the creator of many 3D sci-fi scenes and props for the Poser and DAZ market.

Could you briefly describe yourself?

I'm originally from New Orleans and remain a big fan of the Saints (Who Dat!) and cajun food. I moved to Central Florida many years ago where I still live. Every spring I'm driven by primal urges to return to my place of origin and eat some crawfish. The nickname comes from years of working the graveyard shift.

How long have you been creating 3D models for DAZ and Poser?

I sold my first product to Daz in late 2006 and got my first brokered product into the store in early 2007. Those early projects took quite a while to get done as I was still learning much of the process. I've managed to streamline my workflow quite a bit since then.

How did you get started making models?

I started in 3D by making free maps for the Unreal Tournament game series. This led to playing around with 3D modelling software to make static meshes to use in the maps I made. I moved on to making Poser/ Daz content where I could make things with higher polycounts and actually make some money from them.

Which software programs do you use?

LightWave for model building and UVmapping. Paint Shop Pro and DarkTree for texture creation along with use of images from cgtextures.com. Poser for rigging and materials. Poser File Editor and EasyPose Underground for editing.

How long does it take to create a typical product, can you walk us through the process?

Usually around three weeks, give or take. Most of that is spent in LightWave. I always UVmap as I'm building and usually create the necessary textures right afterwards so I have a good idea how it's going to look when it's done. Then I import into Poser for rigging and material setup, followed by some editing to clean up the file. The exception is when it's a project involving several small objects in which case I'll import and set them up individually or in small batches.

You focus on the Dystopia theme, is this something you created or are others working with you on Team Dystopia and the products themselves?

Team-Dystopia is the brainchild of my buddy Moebius who builds some amazingly cool stuff for his imagined futuristic world. He's recruited several people to handle certain aspects of product development and we've collaborated on several projects. And we've got more stuff in the works.

Is this a full time job for you or still mostly a hobby?

It started as a hobby and eventually became full-time. Which means getting new products out on a regular basis to ensure a steady income.

Can you tell us what kind of products you find sell best, vehicles, buildings, characters, etc?

I do best with interior and exterior settings along sci-fi and industrial themes and more recently I did some steampunk projects. I also found a bit of a market niche with props like weapons, tools and other hand-held gear. Vehicle sales can be very unpredictable which is why I haven't made one in a while. Vehicles also take longer because I always get carried away with making a lot of moving parts which means more rigging and editing. I tend to think every vehicle should be loaded with weapons even though I'm not allowed to mount a rocket launcher on my pickup truck.

Are you working on anything new you can talk about?

Right now I'm working on another setting for the Odysseon Station series which are sci-fi themed interiors. I'm juggling several other ideas but they aren't far enough along to go into specifics.

3D-Coat 3.7 released

Fri, Nov 11 2011 19:26:27 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

3D-Coat 3.7, the popular application for sculpting and painting 3D models, has been released.

Some of the new features include:

Applink Connection Plugins *allowing the easy transfer between 3D-Coat and modelers like 3DS MAX, Maya, LightWave and more.*

Instancing Support *allowing multiple scenes to be opened without the additional memory requirements.*

New CutOff Tool *to do precise boolean operations.*

New Brush Engine *faster and smoother than before.*

Many improvements to ***Vertex Mode****,* ***Paint Mode*** *and* ***UV & Retopo Mode****.*

A free 30-day trial is available for Macs and PCs.

Marvel to include free digital codes with comics

Fri, Nov 11 2011 19:03:45 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

The comics industry has really been embracing the digital realm in the past 2 years, providing their past comics online, and with iPad apps coming out from all major publishers. Now, IO9 reports that Marvel is going even further, and will provide free digital codes for those who buy select comic books and graphics novels. A few comics have included digital codes in the past, but Marvel is the first to do it for graphics novels, and starting in early 2012, those who buy an issue of Season One books will then be able to download a digital copy of the same novel using the Marvel Comics app for iOS, Android or Marvel's Chrome app.

Modern Warfare 3 biggest entertainment launch ever

Fri, Nov 11 2011 18:55:17 UTC by Edd Sterling filed under news

*In somewhat unsurprising news, **Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3** broke all sales records during its first 24h, selling 6.5 million units in the US and UK, and making over $400 million dollars. It's the biggest entertainment launch ever, surpassing every previous game, movie or book launch. According to Bobby Kotick, CEO of Activision, ''Other than Call of Duty, there has never been another entertainment franchise that has set opening day records three years in a row. Life-to-date sales for the Call of Duty franchise exceed worldwide theatrical box office for 'Star Wars' and 'Lord of the Rings,' two of the most successful entertainment franchises of all time.''*

PROTECT-IP law explained

Fri, Nov 11 2011 18:43:27 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under videos

PROTECT-IP, the new law that the US Government is trying to pass, is hotly debated by a lot of people. But it's also of crucial interest to creative people, since if passed, it will drastically affect your ability to upload videos, music, art, and any creative work online. It will put large Hollywood firms back in control of who is able to create things and share them with the public. Here's a video made by the Fight for the Future group explaining the new law.

LightWave 11 announced

Fri, Nov 11 2011 4:46:19 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

*This evening NewTek held an event in Hollywood called **VFX Minds** hosted by Jeri Ryan, with guests Mark Rydell, David Cohen, and others. The panel covered various challenges faced by current VFX artists and film makers, where veterans in the industry talked about topics like technology advancement, 3D movies, the increased visual effects presence in video, and more.*

*NewTek also introduced **LightWave 11**, the latest version of their popular 3D modeling software. Some of the new features include:*

***Instancing**, allowing you to create virtual groups of very large objects, so you don't run out of memory when dealing with a lot of polygons.*

***Flocking**, a special physics controller that can create fluid motions for birds or schools of fish.*

***Fracture**, a new modeling tool that allows you to break up an object as if it had been destroyed.*

***Bullet dynamics**, a proven, open source engine that simulates bullet movements, and can be used with Fracture to create realistic animations.*

***Visual Studio tools** to use third party controllers like the PS Move, along with various enhancements.*

LightWave 11 will ship before the end of the year and cost $1,495, with the upgrade priced at $695.

Behind the scenes video of Terra Nova

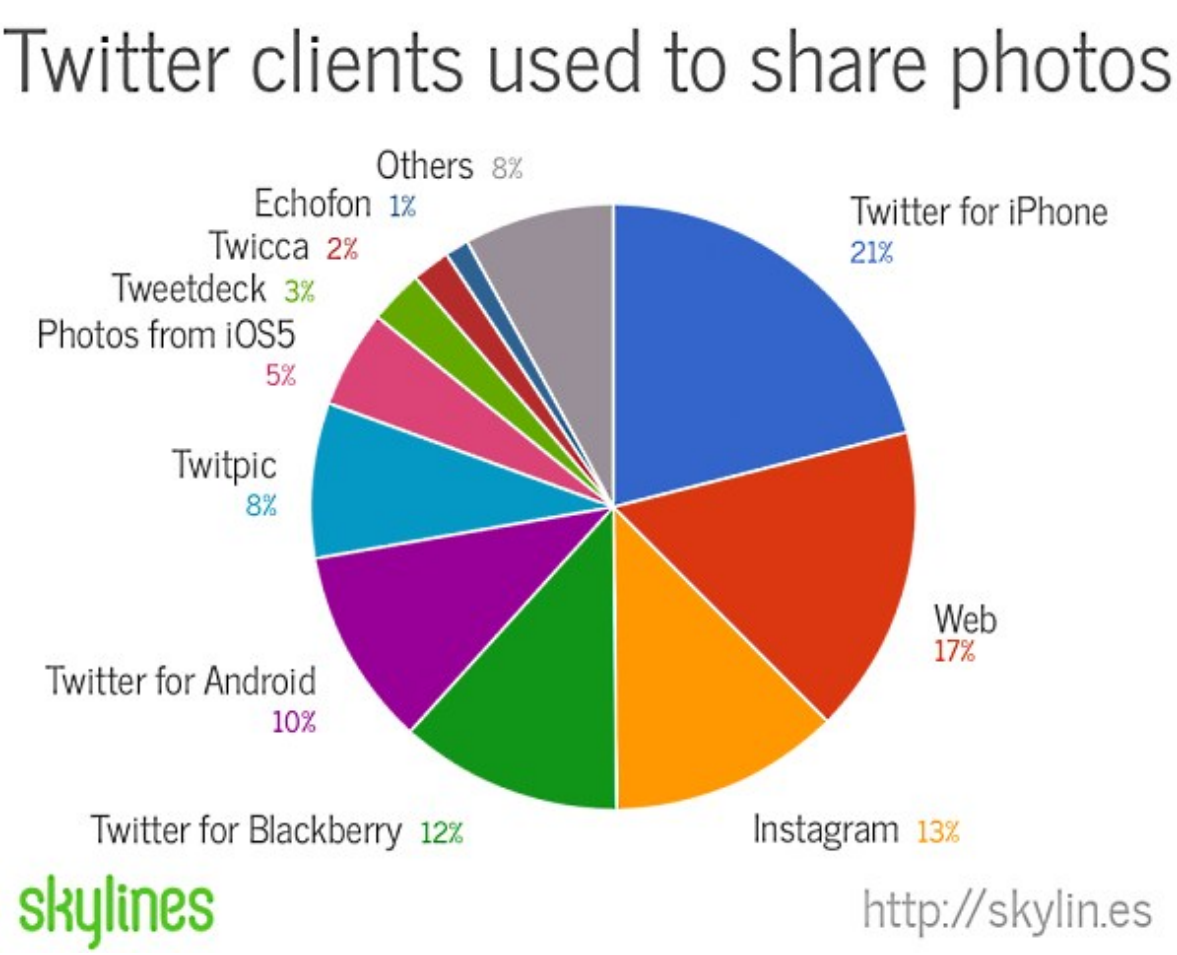
Fri, Nov 11 2011 1:26:52 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

*IO9 posted a very nice behind the scenes video of **Terra Nova** showing how the dinosaurs, futuristic cities and vehicles were made and integrated into the shots. It's interesting to see how a lot of the back drops are actually CG, and how even some of the actors are sometimes replaced with 3D models.*

Twitter image sharing stats published

Thu, Nov 10 2011 22:15:00 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Skylines, a company behind photo sharing software, posted some stats today about how Twitter users are sharing photos and other media. After analyzing over 24 million images in a one week period in late October, the data shows that most people prefer Twitter for the iPhone (21%), or the web version (17%). In fact, it recently passed the previous top services, TwitPic and yfrog.



The study also showed other stats, like the fact that Twitter's iOS 5 integration in early October has been widely successful, becoming the 7th most preferred way to share photos in just 2 weeks. Another interesting fact is that users seem to prefer a different sharing platform based on the device they use. Twitter itself is most popular on the iPhone, yfrog keeps the top spot on BlackBerry, and TwitPic on Android devices.

Almost no one uses MMS anymore to share on Twitter, and it accounts for only 0.4% of all media shared.

Artist showcase: Enrique Parietti

Thu, Nov 10 2011 20:20:40 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we showcase the great art of Enrique Parietti, a 3D modeler from Barcelona.

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Enrique Parietti ©2003
epar3d@terra.es

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How Sports Illustrated went from print to digital

Thu, Nov 10 2011 19:54:22 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under videos

A very interesting 23 minutes talk with Terry McDonell, Editor of Sports Illustrated, from the Mashable Media Summit, covers the transition that their magazine went through to go from print to digital. In the video, they go over the challenges that such a big and popular magazine had in order to make the move, and what the culture was within the editorial and design team.

Behind the scenes of The Lost Town of Switez

Thu, Nov 10 2011 18:47:27 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

*SideFX has an article showing some behind the scenes shots of **The Lost Town of Switez**, an animation that won multiple awards. Using Houdini, they show how crowd simulations were done, along with some special effects like waves and fire. They also talk about the unique painterly look that the whole animation has.*

VFX behind the scenes video from the 1980s

Thu, Nov 10 2011 17:11:29 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

In a fascinating video, we can see some behind the scenes shots of Dream Quest, a visual effects company from the early 1980s, giving us a glimpse of how VFX was done back then, along with commentaries. It includes a lot of matte painting shots, and early screen effects.

Creating and animating an alien creature video tutorial

Thu, Nov 10 2011 17:01:14 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

*3D World has a very nice freebie from their latest issue, where Mathew Burniston shows us in a series of videos how to create and animate a creature inspired by the movie **The Thing** using ZBrush, Maya and Modo.*

How Nokia designs a smartphone

Thu, Nov 10 2011 16:54:27 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Nokia published an interesting 9 minutes production video showing how they design a smartphone, from initial concept on paper to the final product, along with 3D models, meetings about various little details, and final product testing.

Behind the scenes of The Shop

Thu, Nov 10 2011 16:50:16 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

*Tax Free Film released a video showing behind the scenes shots of their latest production **The Shop**, where we see how the 3D models were done, the animation, and some of the original concepts.*

The importance of fonts

Thu, Nov 10 2011 16:40:56 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Text is something that's very important to graphics designers, yet fonts are often relegated to an afterthought. Mashable has a quick article about the importance of fonts when designing web content, and how picking the right one can make all the difference in readability, mood and message. Fonts are also different from platform to platform, and when using uncommon ones, especially as part of a web page, many devices may not have it, and revert to an other, uglier one. Unlike with print, where designers have all the control over how their printed design will look like, on the web things can easily look different from one screen to the next.

Web designers: Time to ditch Flash, Silverlight, and embrace HTML5

Wed, Nov 9 2011 22:14:47 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Yesterday, Adobe announced major job cuts and a company restructuring, and indicated that their focus on Flash may not be what it used to be, by cutting off Flash development on Android and the Playbook. Meanwhile last week, Microsoft was reluctantly admitting that Silverlight isn't a big part of their future either. The message is clear, and even if it means some relearning for long time web designers, it's time to switch to HTML5 if you haven't already.

Flash came early, and quickly became a very popular way for creative types to make web pages show more than text and images. With Flash, you could add animations, interactivity, and videos. There's an endless amount of web based games, full interactive sites, and of course almost all video hosting sites used Flash. Microsoft came in late, but introduced some very compelling features with Silverlight, including the fact that Windows Phones would support it as well.

But these plugins have problems as well. For one thing, they are more CPU intensive, and require more resources. Then, they aren't supported everywhere, with Apple devices being the big missing part. Thankfully, HTML5 came and provided a cross platform, lean and simple alternative. The standard is still not quite where it should be, and there are cases to be made for using Flash or Silverlight. But these trains have passed, and they won't be coming back. When the companies themselves become hesitant to provide support for their own platforms, it's time to move on.

Fortunately, going to HTML5 isn't that difficult. There's already tools to help people get started. We previewed Adobe Edge a while back, which is an early development tool that can make it really easy to create basic HTML5 based animations. There's also a lot of demos out there of things you can do with HTML5. Even popular game creation tools that have traditionally been centered around Flash, are now switching over, like GameSalad, allowing you to make games both for the web and iOS in one go.

The road to HTML5 is not all joy and glory however. There are still issues, and while the web is cross-platform, you still need to create custom CSS files for older browsers, mobile devices, and so on. Still, this is where the web is going, and if you design on the Internet, whether it's animations, interactive apps, or advertising, then you should get familiar with HTML5.

Fusion 6.3 released

Wed, Nov 9 2011 18:24:51 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

*Eyeon released the latest version of their popular visual effects compositing software, **Fusion 6.3**. Some of the new features in this release include lens distort, LUT cube fuses, reversible brightness and contrast, VolumeFog lighting mode, new Primatte 5, and various other fixes. An evaluation version is available for download now on the site.*

Here's a video that shows off some of the new features in version 6.3:

HTML5 demo gallery

Wed, Nov 9 2011 17:07:33 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Many web designers learned Flash or other plugins early on and are now on their ways to new grounds, moving on to HTML5 instead. The web standard offers a similar experience across browsers, including mobiles, and that's a big incentive for creating multimedia apps. Designzzz today has a nice long gallery of cool HTML5 demos you can look at and get inspiration and ideas from.

Making of Cloth in the Wind

Wed, Nov 9 2011 16:58:47 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

*Sam Welker posted an interesting behind the scenes video of his **Cloth in the Wind** animation, which ends up being a nice tutorial for Cinema 4D, showing how to do effective textures and shaders for cloth.*

Google scores most effective TV ad with Dear Sophie

Wed, Nov 9 2011 16:52:38 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

*According to new results from Ace Metrix, an authority in TV advertising effectiveness, the top effective website TV ad in 2011 so far was **Dear Sophie** by Google, promoting the Chrome browser. In fact, 5 of the top 10 ads are by Google. ''Google, who two years ago never advertised on television, has truly emerged as a major brand marketer this year, introducing high-impact spots delivered at low frequency that last longer than the average 30-second ad.'' according to Peter Daboll, CEO of the firm. In contrast, Bing had 3 ads in the top 10 most effective TV ads, while Go Daddy surprisingly aired the most ads that got poor ratings.*

Online video study by Qumu

Wed, Nov 9 2011 16:37:24 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Qumu, an online video platform provider, published some interesting results from a survey conducted on

2,361 adult users over the course of 3 days in September. Apparently, the leading trend in online videos is that most people find them to be getting more offensive, with a 34% response rate. Following that was more sexual at 28%, and pervasive at 21%.

Forbidden

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Also, the data shows more men have viewed videos (92%) than women (88%), and while at work people say corporate videos should feature experts (40%) instead of stars (26%). Overall, 84% of American adults have watched online videos. The full data is available in their press release.

Interview with TopoGun

Wed, Nov 9 2011 15:35:11 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we talk with Cristi from TopoGun about the latest release of this retopologizing software.

Could you briefly describe yourself?

I'm 29 years old, I live in Bucharest, Romania and I've been working as a senior character artist for about 10 years. I also have a computer programming background starting from the early high school to the late

college years, which somehow made me a technical artist. I always tried to combine art with it's technical aspects.

What is TopoGun?

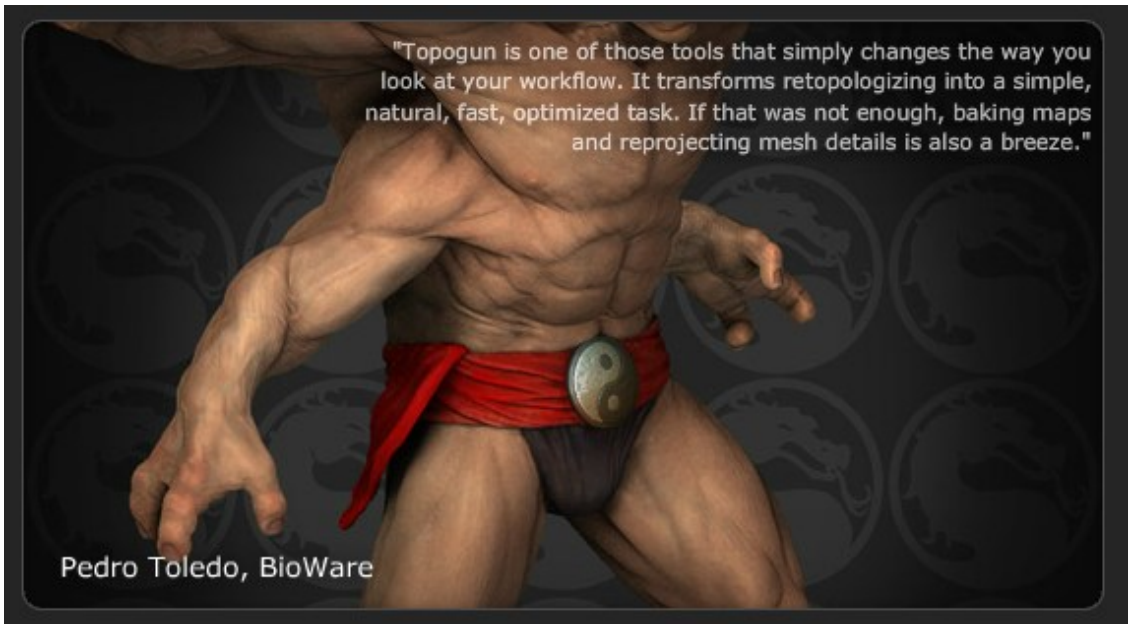
TopoGun is a retopologizing software, mainly. But it can also be used for baking maps and several other interesting and important stuff.

Why did you initially create the program?

When I first started to write TopoGun, about 7 years ago, it was for personal use. Retopologizing was just more like a theory back then and not actually a step in the pipeline (or at least it wasn't such a popular and mainstream process). Digital sculpting was just emerging and given the fact that I had the chance to work on some next-gen titles that actually involved digital sculpting into the workflow, I had the opportunity to figure out and try to find ways to improve the production process.

I was working at AMC STUDIO back then as a character artist and have been working with great artists and workmates. The only retopologizing solution was way too expensive for me and had a not-so-nice interface and workflow. It was only used in the film industry, to retopologize 3D scans. So I decided to create my own set of tools to get the job done. The first working versions were used in-house and I noticed the good feedback I got from my colleagues. I decided to make TopoGun available to everybody and started beta testing it.

Then something wonderful happened, I got a great response from artists around the globe involved in testing it and they all seemed to like it. I always tried to listen to their feedback and suggestions, which helped me tremendously in developing it further and adding new exciting features. It was a real brainstorming and I don't think I would've done it without their support and positive feedback, which just kept me going. I remember I was working like 20 hours a day back then, but I had so much fun!

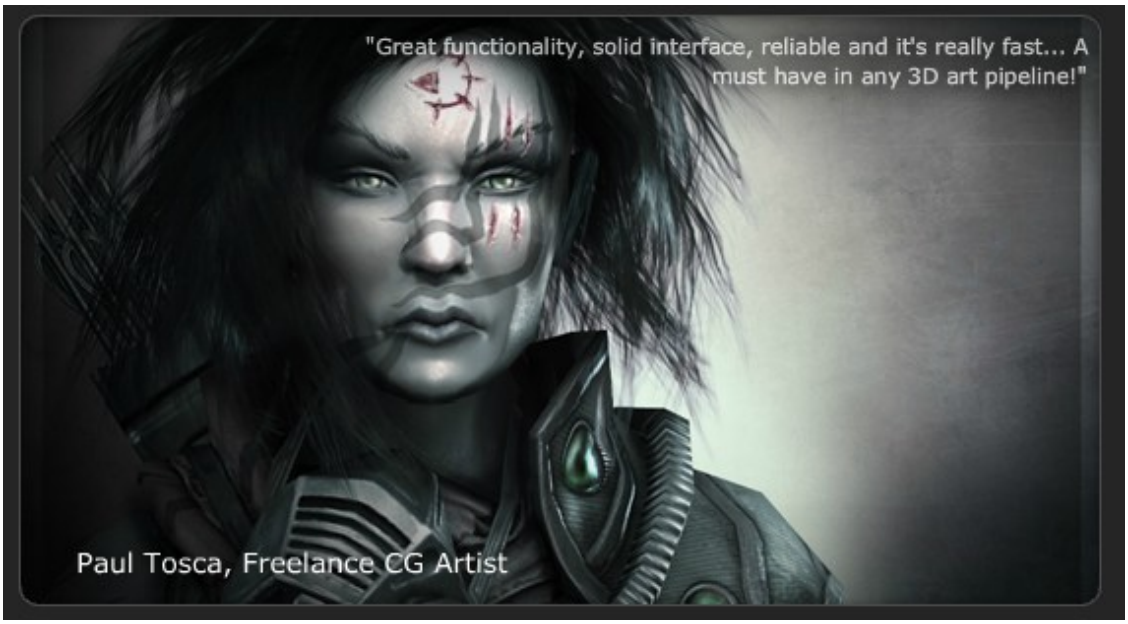


What are use cases where TopoGun would be useful as opposed to built-in tools in popular modelers?

Well, retopologizing is the most obvious case when TopoGun can be used against other tools. Its tools are perfectly streamlined to this, I tried to keep the interface SIMPLE and hide the technical aspects as much as I could. A bloated interface for example or a not-so-friendly workflow just drives the users away when trying a demo. At least that happens to me, as many try a demo without actually reading the docs at the beginning. It's either love at first sight or a quick uninstall. You need to make sure people are tempted to adopt a third party standalone tool, and so many are a little bit reluctant to this idea.

The performance is another important aspect, you need a program that's able to hold huge loads of generic, random and not predictable geometry, after all that's what digital sculpting is about. TopoGun does that very well, due to many low level graphics programming tricks it uses.

The other features TopoGun offers over other popular modelers are the Subdvision, Morpher and symmetry approaches, which, at least to my knowledge, are nowhere else to be found.



The latest version, 2.0, is currently in beta, what major features does it bring over the first one?

TopoGun 2.0 brings more stability and a set of new tools and features, such as the Tubes, Extrude and the Brush tools, the revamped Draw tool, the Morpher and Symmetry Planes extensions. Another major feature is TopoGun for Linux, as there was a huge demand from big film and game studios, which are mainly based on Linux pipelines. The sources have been unified for Windows, OS X and Linux. The licensing system isn't operating system dependent, so if someone buys TopoGun, he doesn't buy TopoGun for Windows, OS X or Linux. He just buys TopoGun, which can be activated or moved between Windows, OS X and Linux. I think a portable licensing system is a fair approach, people change operating systems, it wouldn't be right to limit their options.

When is the full version expected to come out?

By the end of this year, TopoGun 2.0 beta 2 will be available and after a brief retesting period (probably several months, anyway much shorter than beta 1), TopoGun 2.0 will be out. TopoGun 2.0 will be available for free for existing TopoGun 1.xx customers.

How has user feedback been so far?

The user feedback has been fantastic so far, people just seem to enjoy and like TopoGun. I get a lot of emails just to let me know how much TopoGun has changed their workflow and made things easier and artist centric.

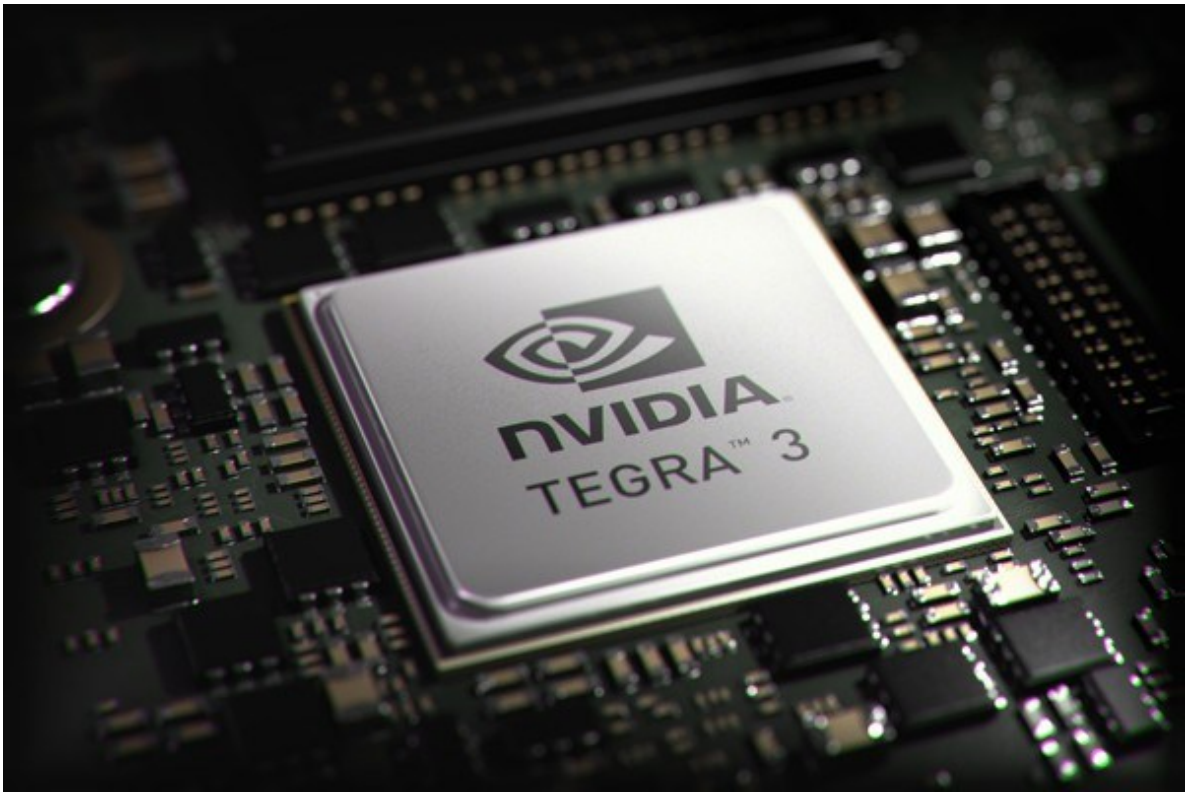
Can you talk about future features you may be working on?

I can't talk about that, but I have a long list of features waiting to get implemented.

NVIDIA introduces Tegra 3 five-core CPU

Wed, Nov 9 2011 6:10:04 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

NVIDIA teased their latest Tegra 3 mobile CPU earlier this year, but today they finally unveiled what they call the first five-core mobile processor. Their claims? A CPU for a mobile device that delivers PC equivalent performance. With five times the power of the previous Tegra 2, this beast is the new king in the world of mobile power, and they claim better battery life too, by using the fifth core which is a special companion core using low power, which can drive the device in standby mode.



The result for users is that whether you're looking at a Flash video, multitasking, or playing a game, you should now expect performance that's never been possible before. In fact, NVIDIA is touting some new Android games that take advantage of the increased power to show what can be done, and is claiming 40 new titles will be released by the end of the year specifically tailored for the new Tegra 3.

The Asus Transformer Prime is the first tablet to have the new chip and should be released in a couple of weeks. Game designers will certainly have a new bar to reach, giving users games with ever increasing graphics capabilities. Here's some videos NVIDIA posted showing some of the technical details, along with comparison shots. The last video shows previews of upcoming Tegra 3 games.

The future according to Microsoft Labs

Wed, Nov 9 2011 5:22:04 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

What will 2019 look like for a busy, creative person interacting with media around us? According to Microsoft Labs, it will be very touch centric, and filled with moving graphics. Also in 3D. Get a glimpse of the future from this video.

Adobe to lay off 750 workers

Wed, Nov 9 2011 5:16:35 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Adobe announced tonight its plan to lay off 750 workers, and spend $94 million on restructuring the company around new digital technologies and marketing. The company plans to keep offering its creative suite of applications, and invest more in touch-based apps, along with cloud services. It also expects to keep moving its tools towards HTML5, as opposed to traditional plugins. For example, they will no longer be developing Flash for Android or Playbook. Shares of the company fell in after-hours trading.

Actor says one word, becomes an online star

Tue, Nov 8 2011 23:07:53 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

In an interesting story of how anything can become viral, Mashable reports on an aspiring actor who was part of a recent AT&T ad where he said one word: ''Huh?'' But after posting about it on Reddit, the ad received 400,00 views and the thread itself almost 3,000 comments. Is it a typical example of Reddit users favoring the underdog, or a brilliant marketing ploy?

What would ART stand for as an acronym?

Tue, Nov 8 2011 21:30:57 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

*DeviantART asked another good question on their Facebook page: **If ART was an acronym, what would it stand for?** As usual, the answers flooded in. Here's some of the more interesting ones:*

- A Random Thought

- Aesthetically Reinvented Truths

- A Reflection of Thoughts

- Alternate Reality Theater

- Awaken Real Talent

- Amazing Renditions of Thought

Autodesk 123D Catch video tutorial

Tue, Nov 8 2011 21:13:03 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

*Autodesk 123D is their newest tool to easily create models from real world concepts. **123D Catch** allows you to take a series of photos, and using their cloud services, create a model from it, and even print the resulting model into a fully realized object. The software is currently available in beta, and Autodesk released a video showing how this works.*

Autodesk acquires GRIP Entertainment

Tue, Nov 8 2011 19:53:04 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

In the news today is Autodesk with yet another acquisition, this time the behemoth bought GRIP Entertainment, a small company out of Montreal that specializes in AI for games. With this technology, Autodesk hopes to ''offer a more complete, simplified solution for the creation of believable interactive characters'' according to Marc Stevens, their VP of Games. The long term goals for the company is to integrate this AI technology in new and existing Autodesk products.

Halo: The Art of Building Worlds

Tue, Nov 8 2011 19:06:13 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

A new book called Halo: The Art of Building Worlds is available for game concept art enthusiasts, and Ars Technica has a review of it. In this hard cover, you'll find large images, concept art, and little text. 10 years of Halo is celebrated through these 192 pages.

Photoshop plugin adds Google Web Fonts

Tue, Nov 8 2011 18:59:29 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Web fonts such as the Google Web Fonts are becoming more popular amongst web designers. But many web designs start in Photoshop, where the fonts available are whatever happens to be installed on your system. Now a new plugin closes the gap, called Web Font Plug-in, which provides the WebINK and Google web fonts from within Photoshop. The plugin is available for free and works on Adobe Photoshop CS5 and CS5.5.

Synaptics shows new trackpad for Windows 8

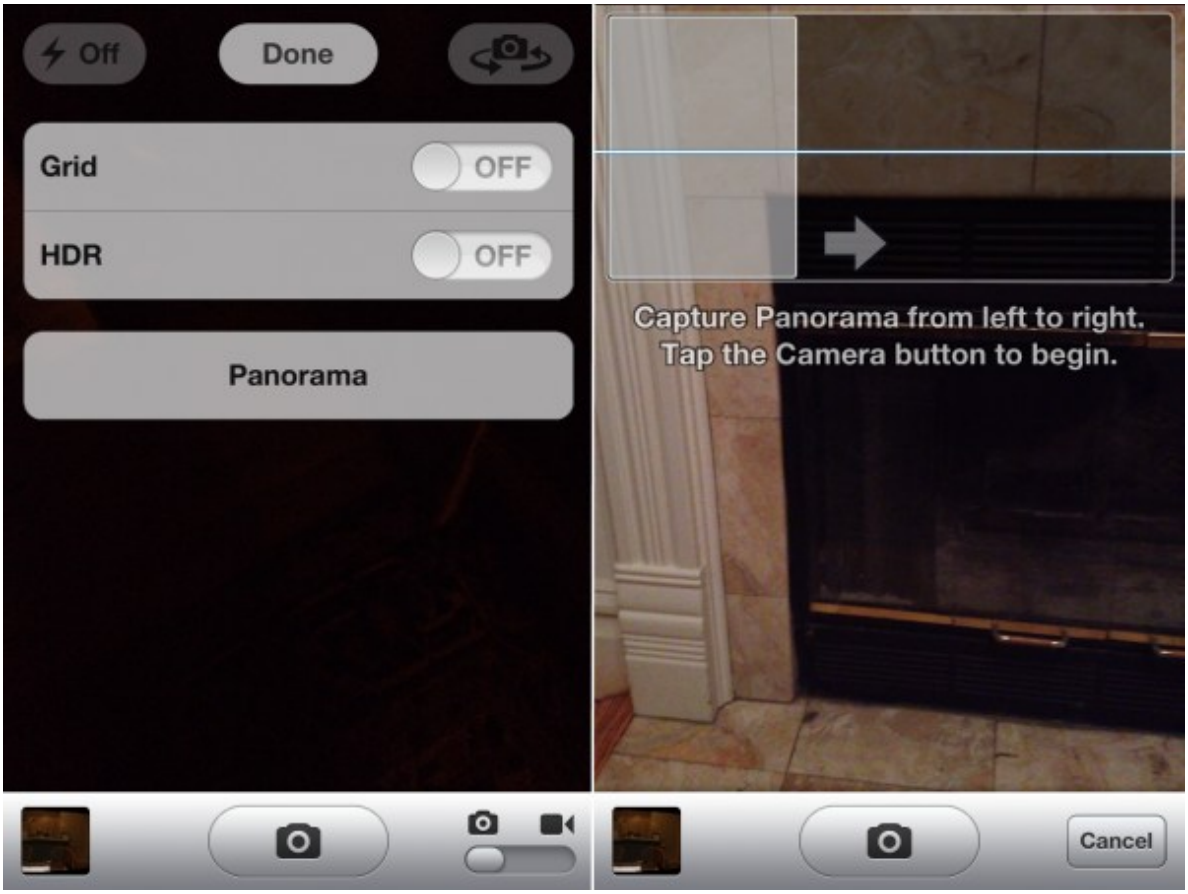
Tue, Nov 8 2011 18:45:33 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

*If there's one input device that hasn't changed much in the past years it's the mouse, or trackpad. Now, Microsoft is touting Windows 8 as having a revolutionary interface, and Synaptics, a company well known for making trackpads, is showing off a concept design of a new trackpad that acts differently, providing better input when used with Windows 8. The **ClickPad** is still a work in progress but their video shows what could be an interesting improvement in user input and faster interaction.*

Secret panorama mode found in iOS 5

Tue, Nov 8 2011 6:26:33 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

An interesting bit of news came out this evening from the iPhone jailbreak community. Apparently, iOS 5 has a fully working panorama mode included. It's just turned off by default. Conrad Kramer found it while hacking at the phone, and Grant Paul posted proof on Twitter. When jailbreaking the phone, this mode can be turned on, and the iPhone happily allows you to take a series of pictures and stitch them together into a panorama. The whole interface is clearly unfinished, but the feature does work.



This isn't the first camera to feature a panorama mode, with many popular consumer grade devices having such a function. Also, Photoshop and other software allows anyone to take photos and then create the panorama in post production. Still, having this function right on the phone is useful when on the road, and it's likely that Apple will put the finishing touches and introduce the feature in a future release of iOS. Until then, if you're feeling adventurous, there's always the unofficial fix in the jailbreaking world.

Artist showcase: NeoArtCorE

Tue, Nov 8 2011 5:21:09 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're glad to showcase NeoArtCorE, a talented artist from Thailand, making digital drawings and fan art.

SlipknoT

Building the world of Glitch

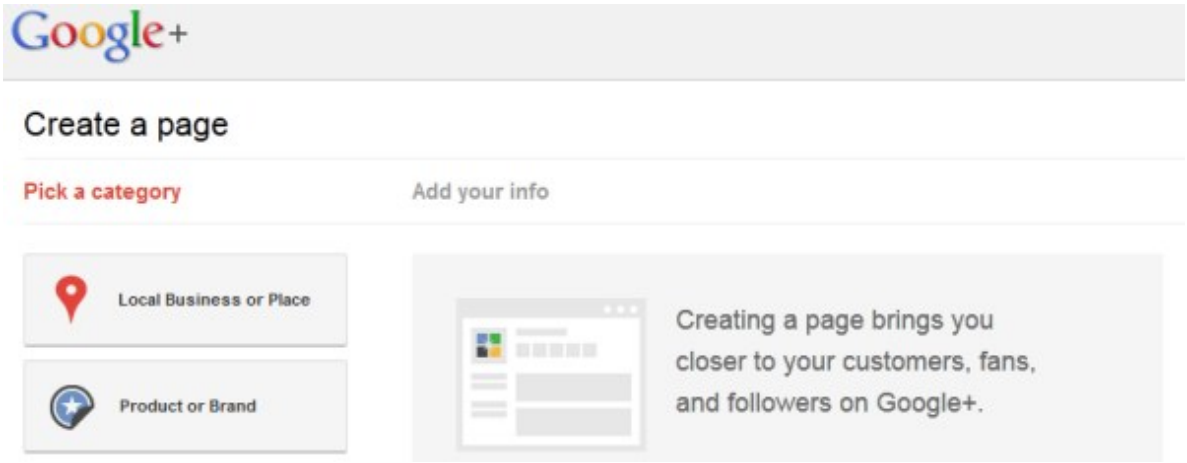
Tue, Nov 8 2011 2:46:57 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

*Ars Technica has an in-depth article about the making of **Glitch**, a somewhat unique web based game that combines well designed characters and no combat. They talk about the original roots of the game, how to capture the fun factor, and the technology the team uses to build new content for the game.*

Google+ pages for art sites

Tue, Nov 8 2011 0:58:45 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Today Google introduced brand pages for Google Plus. After just a few hours, some art communities, sites and companies created their pages. Here's a list of them. We'll update the list as more get added. Found some we missed? Leave a comment!

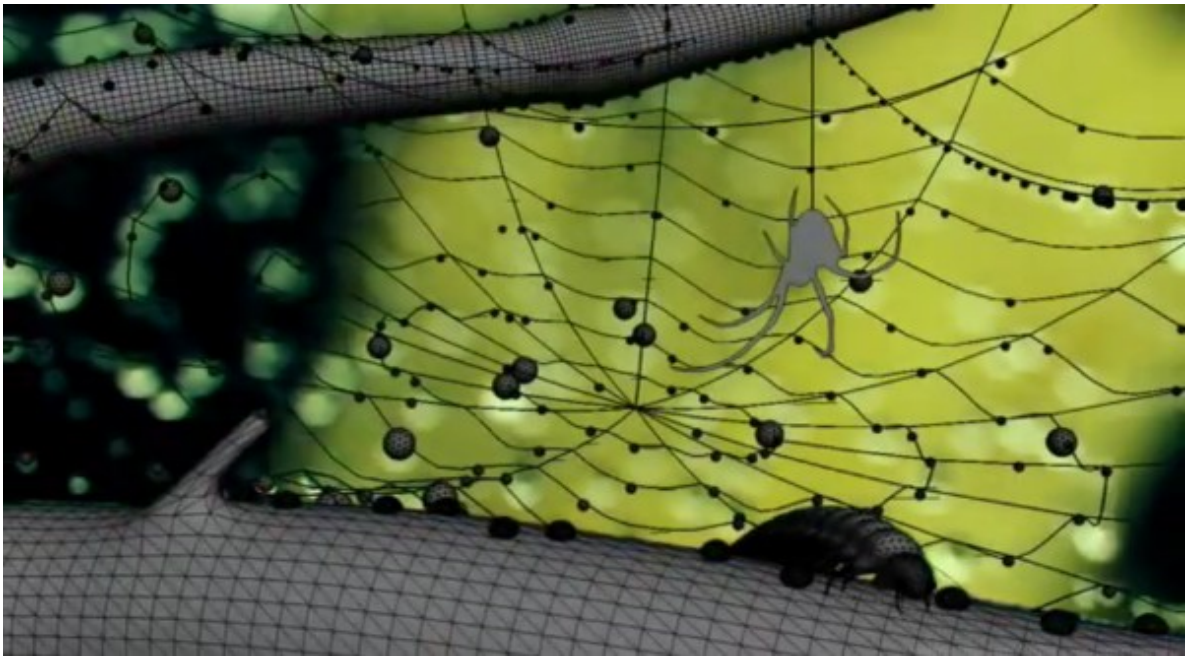


- *TideArt*
- *DeviantART*
- *Abduzeedo*
- *Houdini*
- *CGSociety*

Making a great looking demo reel

Tue, Nov 8 2011 0:19:33 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

In most industries, your CV and reference letters are the things that sell you to an employer. They're your first door of entry, showing what you accomplished in the past, and what your work experience is. Nothing can prove to a prospective employer that you're a good store clerk until you go through a trial. In art fields, it's different. Your portfolio, or demo reel, is what sells you. When you apply to a job as a 3D modeler, animator, even as a concept artist, having a good demo reel is a must.



Fundamentals

*There's several key features to a good demo reel. First, there's the **length**. A demo reel should be short, between 2 and 3 minutes. The simple fact is that an HR recruiter doesn't have time to go through a 10 minutes video of everything you've done in the past. That's why you need to cut down everything but the best. Start by listing what you believe is your best work, whether it's 3D models, visual effect clips, animations, or even drawings, assuming you're a 2D artist, then remove everything that isn't top notch until you have enough material to fit in no more than 2 or 3 minutes.*

*Your demo reel should also include **breakdowns** and **behind the scenes** footage for some or all of your work. It's easy to see a 20 seconds clip of a car exploding, but there's no way for the viewer to know whether you made the car, the explosion, or the compositing. The best way to do this isn't by adding titles. Writing down ''I made the model and the explosion'' just screams of laziness. Instead, show the clip, then show a wireframe view, or the original video before the effects were added. Show the viewer how the shot was made in a visual way. For images, you can do the same thing too, by showing some work-in-process screenshots that you took while making the finished piece.*

*A demo reel should have some **text** in it, but not too much. There's two main things you want the viewer to clearly read and remember: Who you are, and what you do. You need to have at least your name, if not your email and website, and then you need to say what you're doing, like ''VFX Artist'' or ''Concept Artist''. You can also add a list of the software you used at the end of the video. Otherwise, text should be avoided, you want to bring your message visually instead.*

*A good demo reel has **music** in it. But too often people add the type of music that they like, which can mean heavy metal or hard rock. Remember that you're making this demo reel for potential recruiters, and the HR person doesn't like your brand of heavy metal. Instead, try to find good background music, that isn't boring, but doesn't scream into people's ears either. There's lots of public domain tracks available online.*

*Finally, when it's time to upload your reel, think about the **quality** of the video. YouTube is littered with demo reels in 240p and 360p. In this day and age you need to upload an HD video. That means it needs to be at least 720 pixels wide. YouTube can give you good quality if you upload in HD, then you can easily share that link to people, so you don't have to send them a 20 megs AVI file.*

Examples

Now that we have the basics covered, I think seeing some demo reels is the best way to get ideas for making your own. Here are some videos that show some of these concepts.

The first one is a bit short at 1:20 and the music is a bit strong, but the rest is excellent. The very first thing you see is the name of the artist. Too many people don't even have their name written clearly in the video, or a way to contact them. You then see a series of shots, followed by all the breakdowns. In this reel, Peter elected to put the breakdown shots at the end instead of one after the other, which can work also.

This next example is also somewhat short at 1:32, but has much more neutral music. Again we see the name of the artist and the software he used. We see several shots he did, along with some of the behind the scenes. Personally I would have changed the order, since it's always best to start with your best work, and in this case I would have started with the horse or oil rig.

This last example is from a character artist and in 3:10 she shows a nice mix of 3D models, textures, animations and concept shots. The video goes from fully built characters to works in progress, showing wireframes, UV maps and so on. The music and pace is also quite nice.

New Bioware game first look

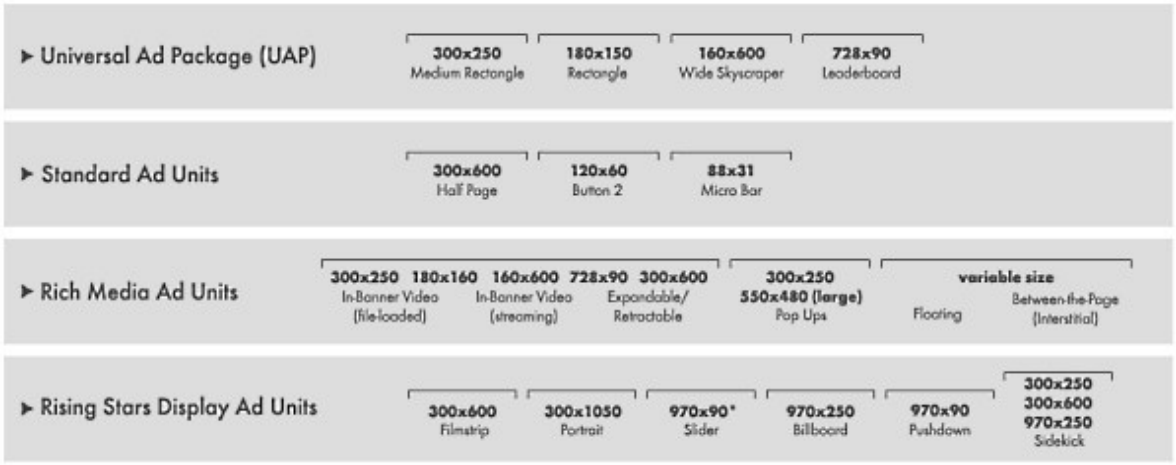
Mon, Nov 7 2011 18:30:19 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

There's been rumors that Bioware would unveil a new game, made by a brand new studio they created, and that unveiling is supposed to happen at the SpikeTV Video Game Awards on December 10th. Now, Game Informer posted the very first image showing the new game, which doesn't tell us much other than it has nicely rendered graphics, explosions, and vehicles. It does look post-apocalyptic too, although it may also just be cart racing in Nevada.

IAB, Adobe implement new web ads guidelines

Mon, Nov 7 2011 17:37:30 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

The Interactive Advertising Bureau, an organization made up of over 500 graphics firms and media companies, has updated its rich media advertising guidelines. These are the standard resolutions, file sizes and media specs that all its advertising members are encouraged to use. With those, it hopes to reduce the wide number of different ad sizes and types around the web, some of which are quite CPU intensive.



Meanwhile, Adobe announced Project Adthenticate, a standardized CPU check tool that ad creators can use for their Flash based ads to make sure they comply with the guidelines, and graphics designers can use to optimize them. For users, this may mean a reduction in annoyance at various web banners as they start complying with the new rules.

Disney and YouTube to partner

Mon, Nov 7 2011 17:25:55 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

This morning the New York Times reported on an upcoming investment of $10 million to $15 million by Disney and YouTube, in order to create family friendly animation shorts that will be hosted on both Disney.com and YouTube. The new channel will feature brand new programming created especially for the web. While rather small, this project may be a landmark deal as such a large production firm partners directly with Google for its web media strategy. So far, Disney has been losing money in the space, and people have already shown that YouTube is a destination they want to go to, so it makes sense for publishers to go where the viewers are. If this works for Disney, many more large production companies may follow suit.

Octane Render for 3DS MAX announced

Mon, Nov 7 2011 17:12:54 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Refractive Software announced that Octane Render, their well known standalone renderer that's fully GPU based, would be released as a 3DS MAX plugin on December 1st. The initial version will be 99 € for current Octane licensees, 174 € for both the Octane and plugin licenses. The plugin will be fully integrated into the modeler, along with its material editor and render options.

Painting with light in Blender

Mon, Nov 7 2011 11:36:50 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Mark Hammond, a Blender modeler, posted a video tutorial showing how to paint with lights with Cycles, the newest Blender renderer.

SketchUp renderers comparison

Mon, Nov 7 2011 3:38:19 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

In this review we'll compare four popular rendering solutions for SketchUp. The initial criteria as to which products were selected included the need for a trial version to be available, and the renderer needed to be accessible from within SketchUp, so it needs to include an actual plugin. The renderers we picked were Indigo Renderer, SU Podium, Maxwell and V-Ray.

The test scene was fairly simple, a house next to water with a boat, one of the most popular models in the 3D Warehouse that Google offers, created by Andres. The process we then go through for each renderer is the same, and is what most users who are fairly new to making renders with SketchUp would do. We first find the plugin, download it, install it, then start doing test renders of our scene. Note that none of these tests included in-depth tweaking of materials, as the purpose of the review is comparing their features and qualities out of the box.

Indigo Renderer

Indigo Renderer was the first in line, and the installation process is fairly simple. You have to download two components for it to work. First, there's the Indigo Renderer standalone software, then there's the SketchUp plugin. Once both are installed, you simply fire up SketchUp and select Render from the Plugins menu. On the first run, it will ask you to locate the ***indigo.exe*** *file. This can be somewhat of a pain if you forgot where you installed the standalone product, but it's usually under C:\Programs Files\Indigo Renderer. Once that's done, the render starts almost immediately.*

On this system, to make a render of 1374 x 804 pixels resolution, Indigo took over an hour, although after around 20 minutes most of the noise was gone, and you can save the resulting image at any point. To start tweaking the result, you can go in the Plugins menu and change the settings, including the size of the render and the exposure. There's also a built-in material editor which allows you to modify the SketchUp materials and add additional attributes like reflection, roughness, bump mapping, and so on.

When you start tweaking, you can gain much better results, and depending on the version you buy, you can have some advanced settings available to you. The demo places watermarks on your images but otherwise seems fully functional. The full software costs €145 or €595.

SU Podium

The next renderer we took a look at was SU Podium, which is also one of the oldest options available for SketchUp. The installation of this one is even easier, because there isn't two separate downloads, it's just one plugin. Once you download and install the product, you can start SketchUp and render right away.

The good news is that the render only took 2mins 10secs on default settings. The bad news is that the result looked much worse. Also, there seems to be less options available, although like every other product it comes with its own material editor. The demo also restrict the size of your render, although it doesn't put a watermark on it. The full version is available for $198.

Maxwell for SketchUp

Maxwell is well known for it's standalone product, but only recently did the company release its SketchUp plugin. The installation is much worse than the previous two options. There is no setup file, instead you download a zip file, and then have to read through a readme text, copy files to a specific directory, and

install MSVC libraries. Once it's installed however, it worked similarly to the previous choices. Under the Plugins menu, you select Maxwell Fire to start rendering.

The render took 8 minutes to finish, and was fairly good, certainly better than SU Podium, although no sky was generated, unlike Indigo. Also, the image seemed to have more noise overall. They do win on the price point however, with two versions of the plugin, one free which has a maximum resolution of 800 pixels, and one at $95.

V-Ray

V-Ray is the professional solution, the gold standard used by many studios all over the world. But on top of their high grade Autodesk plugins, they also offer a SketchUp plugin as well. The demo can be downloaded after you register on their site, and works for 30 days. The installation is simple, a single download file that you run. One thing I did notice however is that it slows down SketchUp's loading time.

With default settings, a render took 6 minutes, and the quality is somewhat average. Certainly it looks better than some of the previous products, but the default water is left as is, and the bright colors are as well. Fortunately, V-Ray seems to offer the most options and material features of the four reviewed products, allowing very fine grain modifications. On the negative side however is the price, around $800, depending on the reseller.

In closing, it's important to note that all of these renders were done with default settings and materials. If you wish to do high quality SketchUp renders, you would need to dig into the specific material editor of your chosen plugin, and modify them accordingly. Still, it does give a good idea of the default results, and render speeds.

Character customization in games

Sun, Nov 6 2011 22:56:30 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Games have always been about the action, the gameplay, but as technology advances, video games have pushed computers and consoles with ever more complex graphics. As characters on the screen moved from pixelated figures to fully rendered 3D models, they've become more lifelike, and along with better character appearances, game developers started adding more ways to customize the character you would play, more so than just in stats, but in looks as well.

Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion

Character customization options started to appear in role-playing games first, like the Elder Scrolls series, and also in MMO games like EverQuest and eventually World of Warcraft. In the early days, 3D models were low polygon counts and looked quite crude. You had a choice between several different faces, and then options for skin color, eye color, and hair.

World of Warcraft

In the case of the popular MMO introduced in 2004, characters still look quite blocky, but Blizzard had the good sense to use very stylized art, instead of going for a realistic look. This makes the resulting characters look iconic, and not too dated. Again, you mostly had a choice of a couple of faces and hair styles, along with piercing options.

Mass Effect

A big advance was made when we moved from a series of pre-made models, to sliders, allowing the player to apply morphs to their characters, and get a much larger selection of appearances. Mass Effect was a popular example of that in 2007.

APB

APB introduced in 2009 a very innovative character customization system, that allowed players to change almost everything about their characters, using sliders instead of pre-made faces. This is one of the most in-depth customization system made so far, allowing you to adjust any small detail, including hair length, muscularity, veins, freckles, and so on. Tattoos can even be designed and added in the game.

Saints Row the Third

Saints Row has always had a very advanced character customization, and just recently released their preview for what character creation will look like in game. Again, they use sliders to go through the various options, although there isn't as many options as in APB.

Mafia War 2

It may seem weird to add a Facebook game after a list of RPG and MMO games, but the fact is character customization options are no longer restricted to role-playing, or even high budget games. Now often action games offer some basic appearance options like the hats and special weapons in Team Fortress 2, and even social games, which traditionally have only offered you a basic gender selection, now feature full customization options, even on sprite graphics. Mafia War 2 is a good example, offering different skin types, tattoos, hair styles, and a large collection of clothing options.

Poll: Do you make art?

Sun, Nov 6 2011 20:22:09 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Art is something that's liked universally. Very few people can say they despise all types of art. There's also a lot of people who make art, whether it's drawings, paintings, modeling, videos or special effects. Many people may not consider themselves artists, but as long as you create something new, something for others

to enjoy, then you are. Do you make art, and is it something you do for a living?

Forbidden

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Behind the lights of In Time

Sun, Nov 6 2011 4:36:09 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

*Today The Daily posted a quick behind the scenes video showing how the team behind the special effects in the movie **In Time** created the illuminated clocks on actors forearms, with the help of LED lights and VFX software.*

Artist showcase: Yu Cheng Hong

Sat, Nov 5 2011 21:19:09 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

Today we're happy to bring you a great artist from Taiwan named Yu Cheng Hong, who makes 2D, 3D and animations.

What it means to date a graphics designer

Sat, Nov 5 2011 19:44:42 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Silvia over at her bourbon blog posted a long list of reasons why not to date a graphics designer. They are mostly true, although some are less specific to designers. Here's some of the funnier ones.

- They will analyse conversations in layers.

- You'll come out the last out of the movies because you have to see the full list of credits.

- They will fill your house with magazines and whatever is out there that has drawings.

- They want to save the world only with a poster.

- You will spend the day brainstorming.

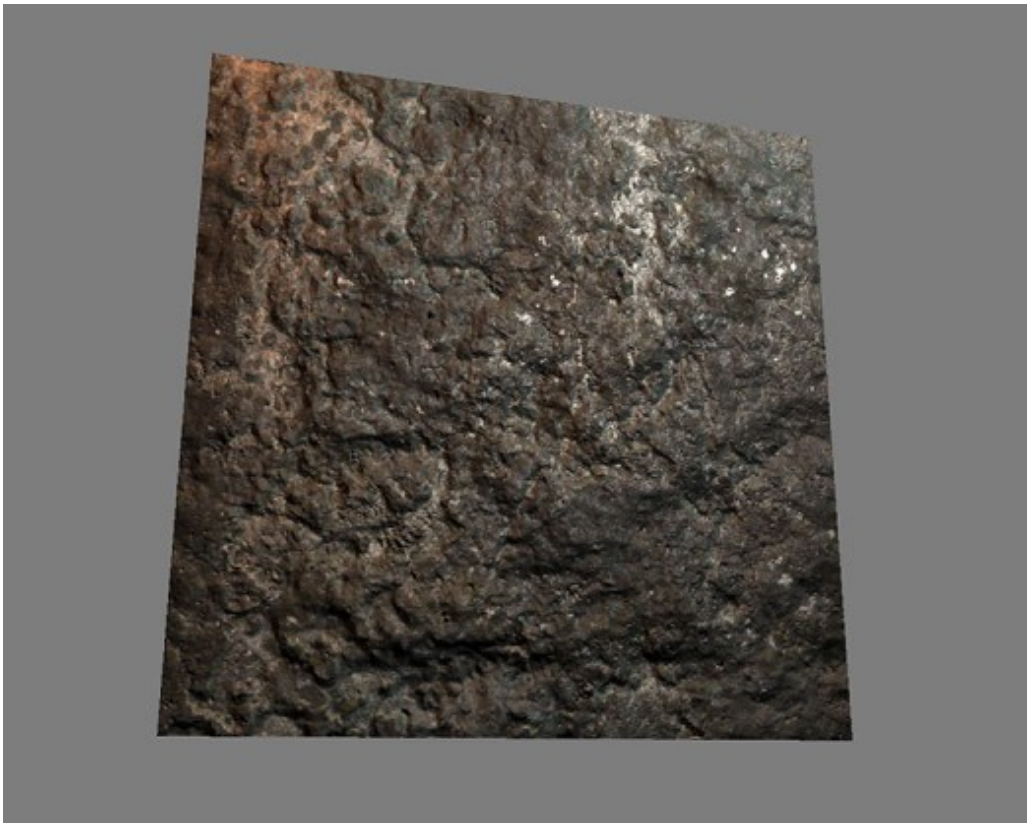
- They can't go to a restaurant without secretly critiquing the menu design.

- You wake up in the middle of the night hearing them screaming ''When is the deadline?''

Realistic stone tutorial

Sat, Nov 5 2011 19:34:35 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Today Philipk posted an interesting tutorial over at CGArena on how to create a realistic stone texture using ZBrush, Photoshop and 3DS MAX. He follows every step from the high-polygon mesh to the finished texture.



The Hobbit production video 4

Sat, Nov 5 2011 8:33:09 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

*Peter Jackson has been posting regular behind the scenes videos online, showing how the shooting is going on **The Hobbit** set. This week we're up to the 4th one, where he mostly talks about HD video, 3D, and the RED camera. Check out the previous videos below if you missed them.*

The Hobbit Movie - Peter Jackson - Production Video 1

The Hobbit Movie - Peter Jackson - Production Video 2

The Hobbit Movie - Peter Jackson - Production Video 3

Inside a unique ad design agency

Sat, Nov 5 2011 7:17:51 UTC by Vanessa Riley filed under news

Inc Magazine has a fairly interesting report about life in one of the biggest independent ad design firms in the US, the Richards Group, controlled by Stan Richards, who rules in a fairly atypical way. First, he insists on strict 8:30 AM to 6 PM days, with punch in cards. Then, meetings are run in an orderly fashion, where if any employee is late, they don't get in. Stan's typical day during a hot summer day is inside a meeting room talking about contracts. Most creative companies are the complete opposite, promoting a relaxed attitude, but Stan Richards insists that his way works, having brought his agency to billings of $1.28 billion. Read the full article for more about his management style.

Being a beginner

Fri, Nov 4 2011 22:59:35 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Phillip Torrone wrote an interesting piece over at MAKE Magazine about creating things, and being a beginner. He makes the point that being an expert at something often means the end, whereas being a beginner means the path can take you to unexpected, interesting places. Beginners approach things with an open mind, they don't say ''I can't do things this way'' and they spend their time exploring new ideas. Check out the article for an interesting comparison between beginner and expert.

SOAPBOX with phillip torrone

Making of Need for Speed cinematic by Michael Bay

Fri, Nov 4 2011 20:52:22 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

*Game cinematics have become more and more involved, high budget and high production. But **Need for Speed** went for a whole new level of production value by hiring Michael Bay to direct it. The result is **The Run**, a trailer that was teased earlier this year. Now, we have a behind the scenes video showing how the cinematic was made, with Michael Bay explaining some of his thoughts behind the production.*

You can see the full 2:30 minutes long cinematic here:

Gametrailers also have another interview with one of the producers behind the game itself, talking about the making of the game, how the characters were selected, and the features of The Run.

Amazing behind the scenes shots from Star Wars

Fri, Nov 4 2011 20:08:24 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Over in Buttercup Valley, in 1982, Make Davis took a long series of behind the scenes photos on the set of ***Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*** *showing one of the most iconic scene from the movie. He tells his story over at PropStore and shares the photos he took before the Internet, or the digital age, even existed.*

Top 8 worst fonts in the world

Fri, Nov 4 2011 19:45:37 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Fonts have always been a highly debated topic amongst designers, and they end up being very important in any creative product. Using the right font can change a logo from boring to memorable. But there's some fonts that just don't do it, and receive no love from graphics designers. Simon Garfield over at FastCoDesign has a fairly long article about the top 8 worst fonts in the world.

Is there a particular font you dislike? Let us know in the comments.

100 3DS MAX tips

Fri, Nov 4 2011 18:19:53 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Jamie Gwilliam from Autodesk UK has an interesting post this week with a list of 100 quick 3DS MAX tips, compiled over a three months period, and promises even more to come soon.

There's many good ones including:

- If using gamma then ensure the gamma settings of Bump/Specs/Normal/Opacity maps = 1.0. (Found in file load options.)

- To ignore an object when zooming (Z), Right Click the object and select Object Properties>Ignore Extents

- Press F9 shortcut key to perform a re-render using the previously used camera and output settings

- Use CTRL+ALT+Middle Mouse button in the animation timeline to offset the whole of your original animation timeline

- You can record animation from one object and reuse on another via the 'Load/Save Animation' options, under the animation menu header

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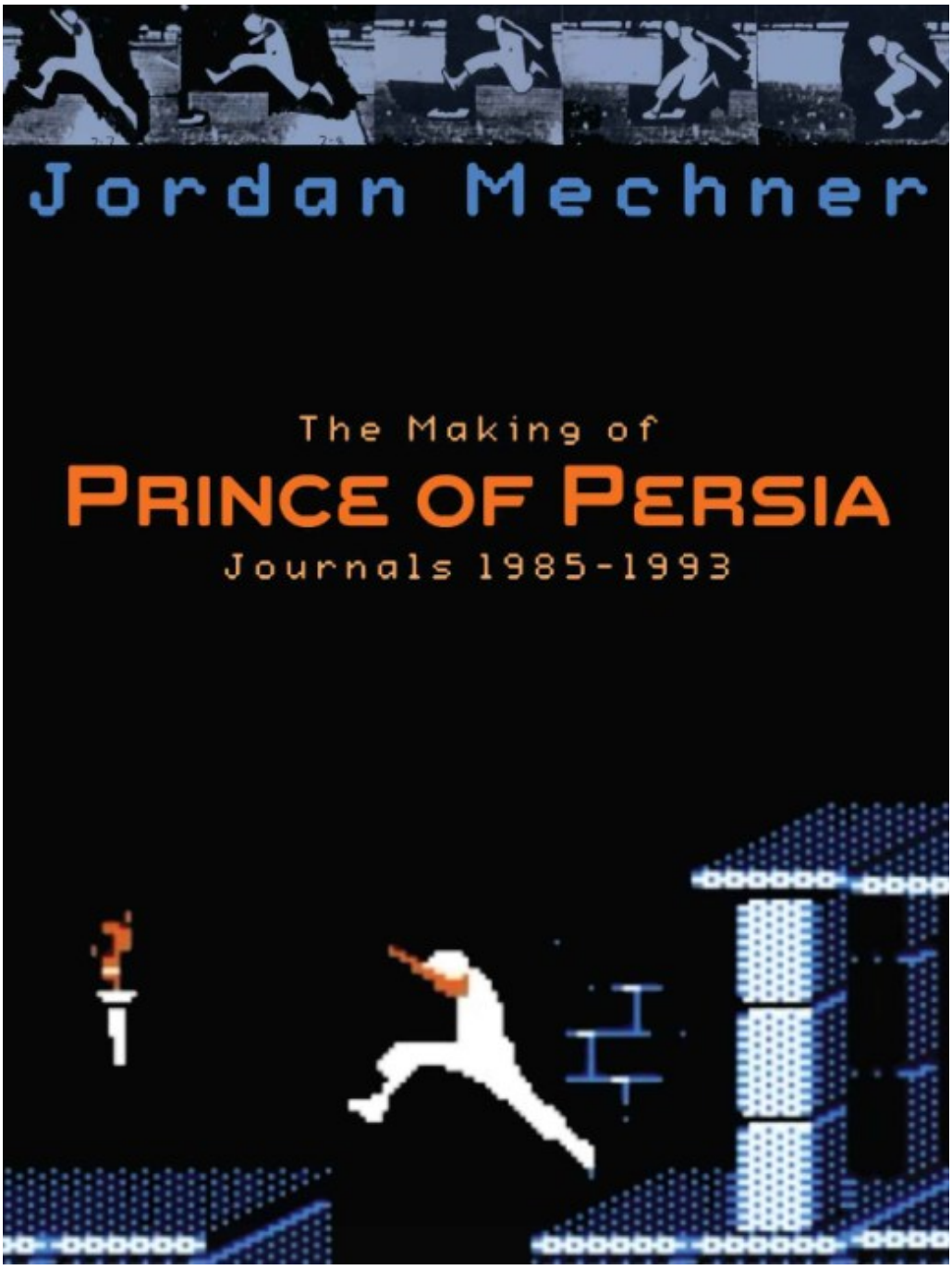
Making of Prince of Persia

Fri, Nov 4 2011 18:08:45 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

*Gamasutra has excerpts from the new book **The Making of Prince of Persia**, a fairly unusual behind the scenes recount, since it started in 1986 and was written down as a daily journal. These entries were then compiled and turned into a publication, giving some amazing insights into how game design happened back then.*



Zombie portrait tutorial

Fri, Nov 4 2011 17:57:06 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Coming just a tad late for Halloween, Andy Walsh posted a tutorial showing how to convert a normal portrait photo into a scary zombie monster, using Photoshop. With a combination of filters and digital painting, he shows us how to make one scary looking figure.

PAX East announced

Fri, Nov 4 2011 17:52:06 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Gaming conventions are always good sources of game related behind the scenes goodness, and PAX East is no exception. Falling on Easter weekend next Spring, registration is now opened for those who want to get a sneak peak of upcoming games.

Vue 10 xStream and Infinite released

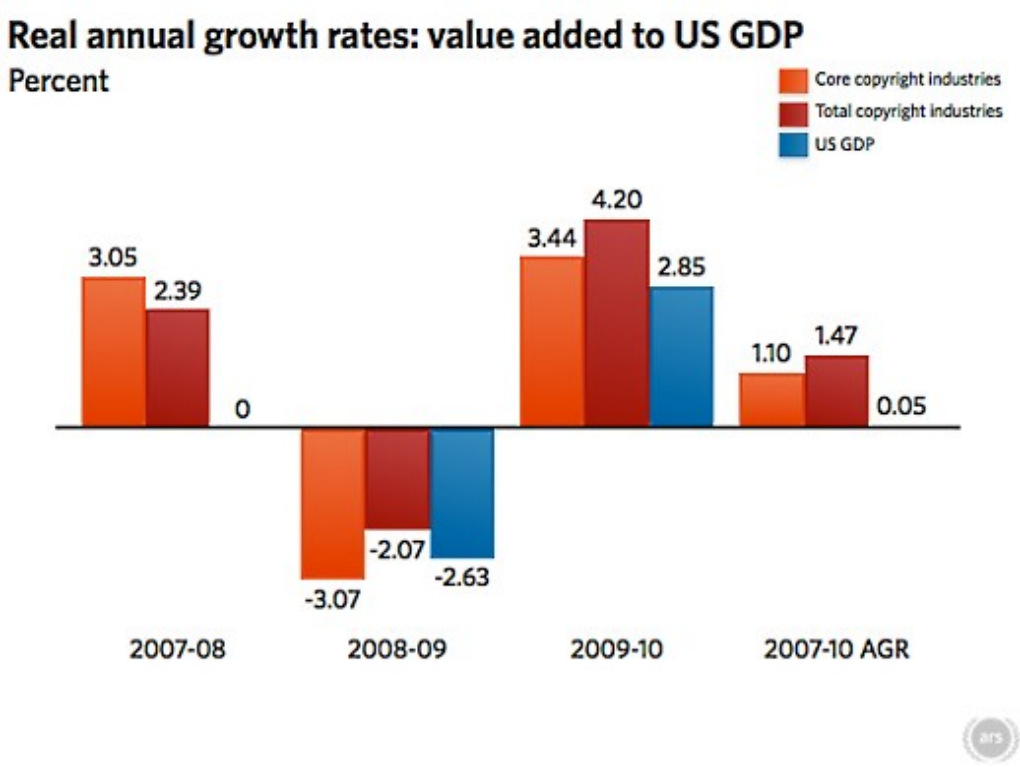
Fri, Nov 4 2011 2:27:02 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Today E-On Software announced the release of Vue 10 Infinite and xStream, now available for all on their website. The other editions, like Frontier and Pioneer, will be released in mid-November. This latest version has several new features including spline and road tools, dynamic rocks, better water shaders, terrain editor improvements, improved depth of field and more. The software is available at $995 for Infinite and $1495 for xStream. Upgrades versions as well as a subscription option is also available.

New report says Intellectual Properties industry makes money

Thu, Nov 3 2011 23:00:01 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Ars Technica has a summary of a recent report from IIPA, which talks about how the Intellectual Properties (IP) industries such as video, gaming, music, and so on, have fared in the past few years. According to the data, industry jobs pay more than typical American jobs, they have outpaced the US economy through the current recession, and sales overseas have grown impressively. All this points to the fact that creators such as Hollywood sell more and make more money than before, which sheds some new light on the draconian Internet censorship laws that lobby groups are attempting to pass in the US congress. See the article for all the numbers.

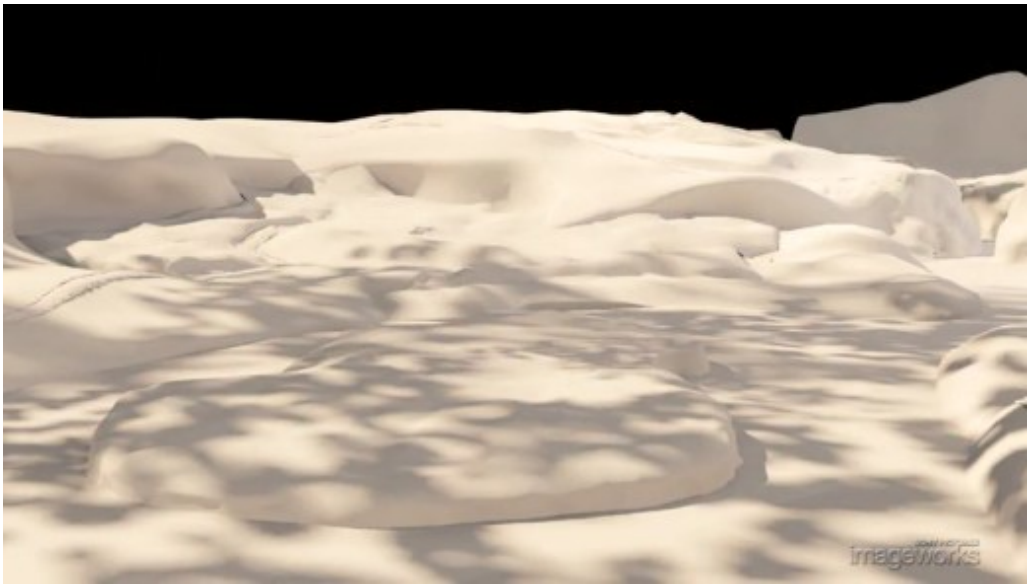


Making of the Smurfs village

Thu, Nov 3 2011 19:38:16 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

*The **Smurfs** ended up being one of this summer's blockbuster films, and one of the most impressive scene was the Smurfs village. Sony Imageworks, the studio behind the creation, showed how the village was made, starting with a single plane, and adding elements until the final render. Every element was modeled, based on real world plants and trees.*

Ground plane



Trees

Buildings

Details and characters

Textures

Final composite

World to run out of hard drives by March

Thu, Nov 3 2011 19:18:09 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Ever since the massive floods in Thailand last month, hard drive makers have been hit particularly hard, with many of them being forced to close their factories. Right away, these companies announced that this catastrophe would have a major impact on the production of hard drives, most of which are created in the country. Both WD and Seagate issued statements saying that their facilities were flooded and they would need time to dry up, repair the equipment, and resume production.

Ever since the announcement, prices for hard drives have sky rocketed, and people who typically need a lot of storage space like video producers or creative studios are starting to see the hit. Now there's word that the supply of hard drives currently on the shelves will last until March of next year, after which there will be no more storage. All we can do is hope the factories have restarted by then.

The Thailand floods this year have been the worse in 50 years, killing over 400 people.

Maxwell for Google SketchUp

Thu, Nov 3 2011 7:53:50 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

*Maxwell, known for it's popular Maxwell Render, has unveiled today **Maxwell for Google SketchUp**, a plugin that brings high quality renders to SketchUp users. The new product is completely integrated inside of the SketchUp interface, and produces renders in real time while the camera is moved around the scene. The package is self-contained, accessible directly from the interface, and can access the thousands of free MXM material files.*

The advantage of this standalone plugin is that you don't need to export your files to an external renderer, although you also don't get access to the extra features of the full Maxwell Render Suite. The user comments from those who tried it so far are positive.

You can view a video introduction here which shows some of the workflow when using this plugin. The base version is free to download and produces draft images, while the licensed version creates HD high quality images and costs $95.

X-Men: First Class VFX breakdown video

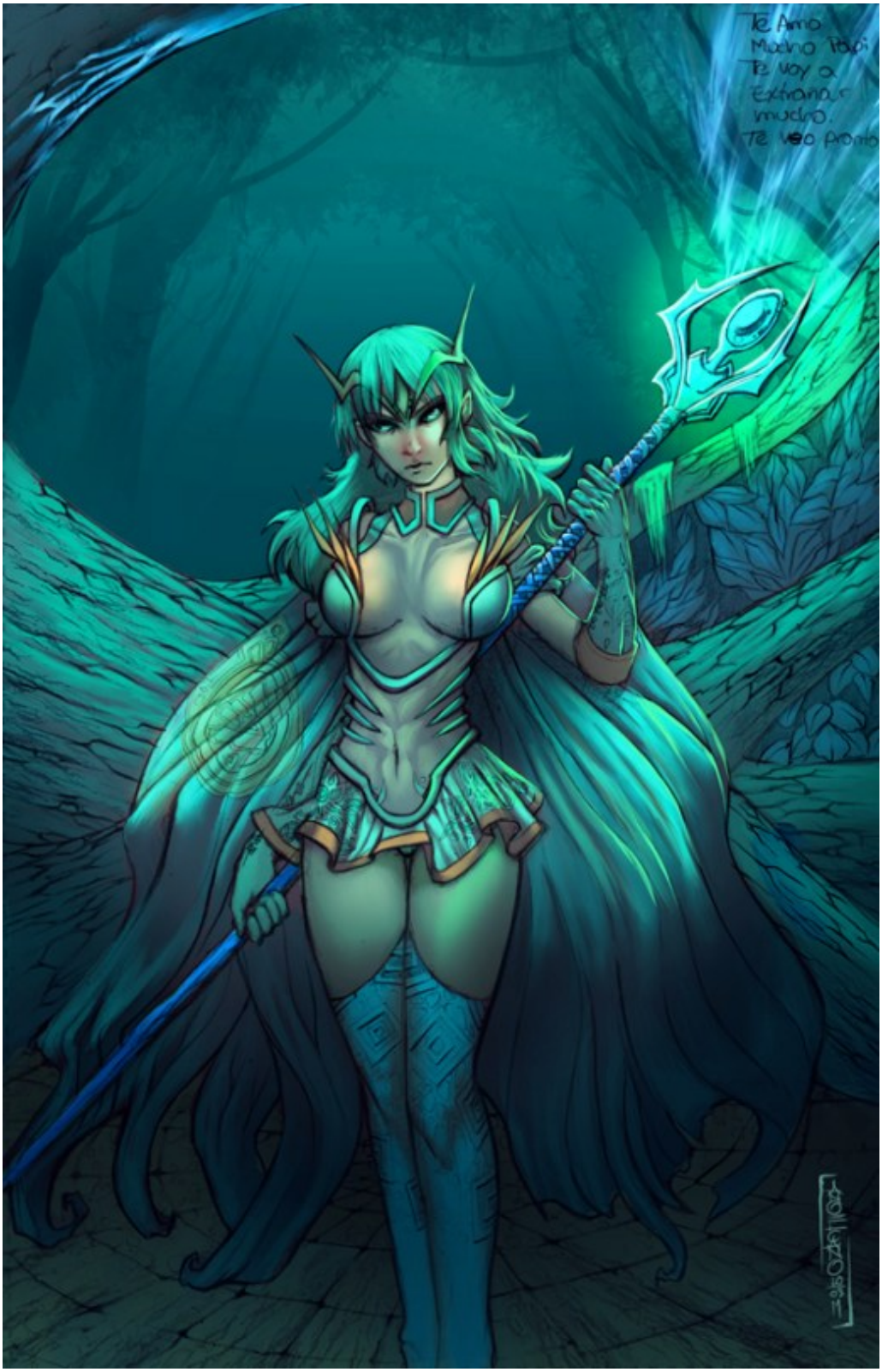
Thu, Nov 3 2011 7:37:45 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

*The VFX team at MPC produced a very thorough behind the scenes video showing the technical breakdown of the various scenes in the movie **X-Men: First Class**. The shots show how all the models interacted with the environment and how the effects fit together.*

Artist showcase: Angel Cano

Wed, Nov 2 2011 21:39:09 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under showcases

This week we're glad to feature Angel Cano, a freelance artist from North Carolina.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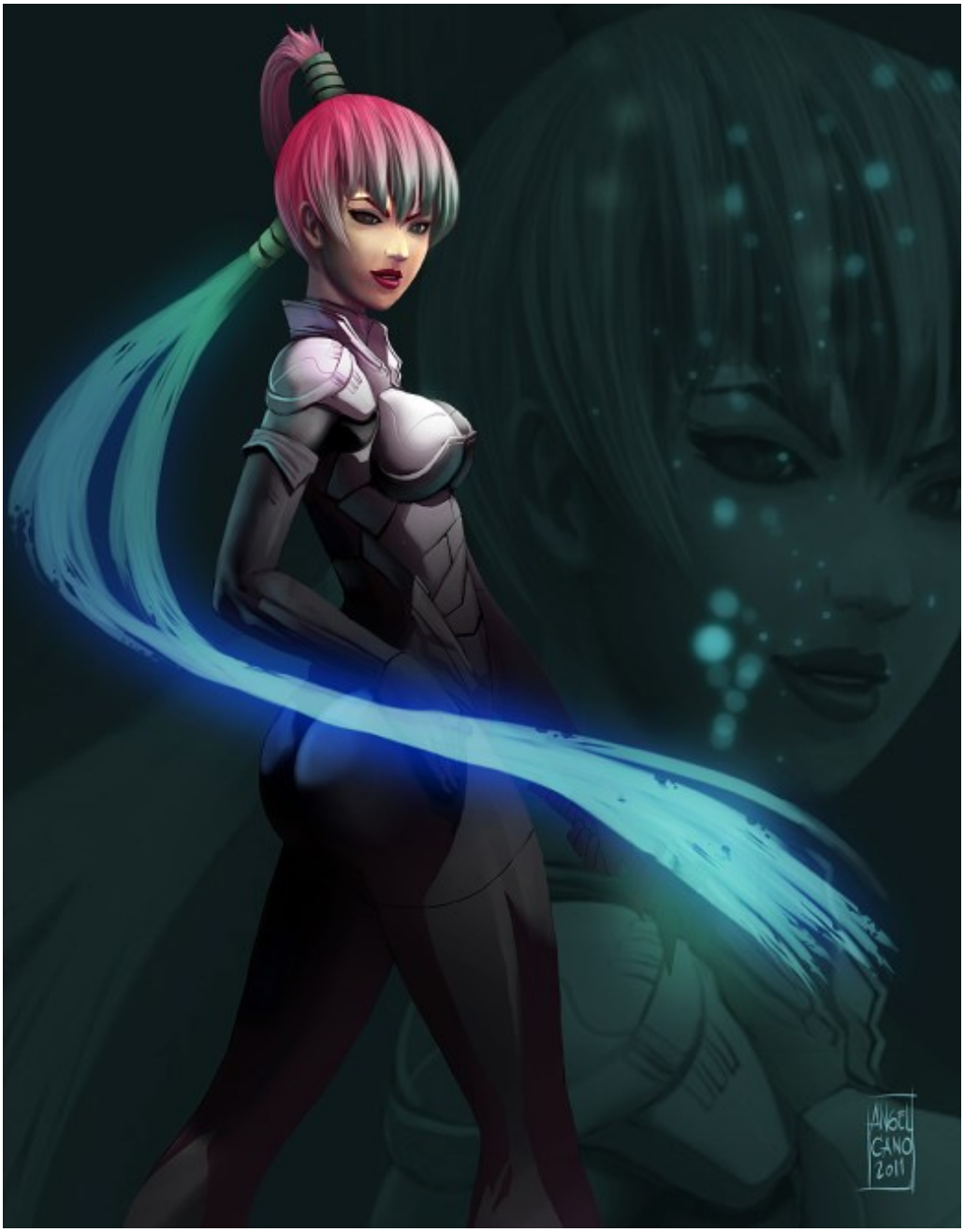
ANGEL
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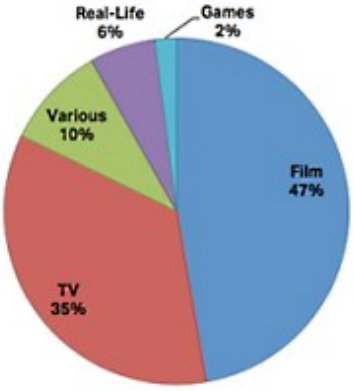
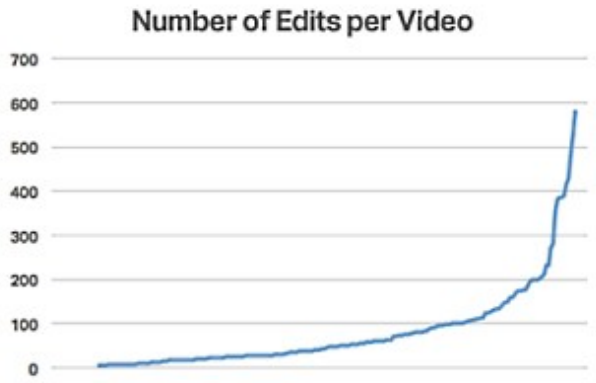
2011

Supercuts

Wed, Nov 2 2011 20:14:36 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Wired has an interesting article about the phenomenon of supercuts, these videos that take a large amount of tiny clips and put them all together, usually based around a word or topic, such as the enhance video, and the Obama spending video. The author ran a study covering 146 supercut videos, and found interesting stats. The average number of cuts per video is 82, and most of them come from films. It seems the phenomenon started in 2006, with the advent of YouTube.





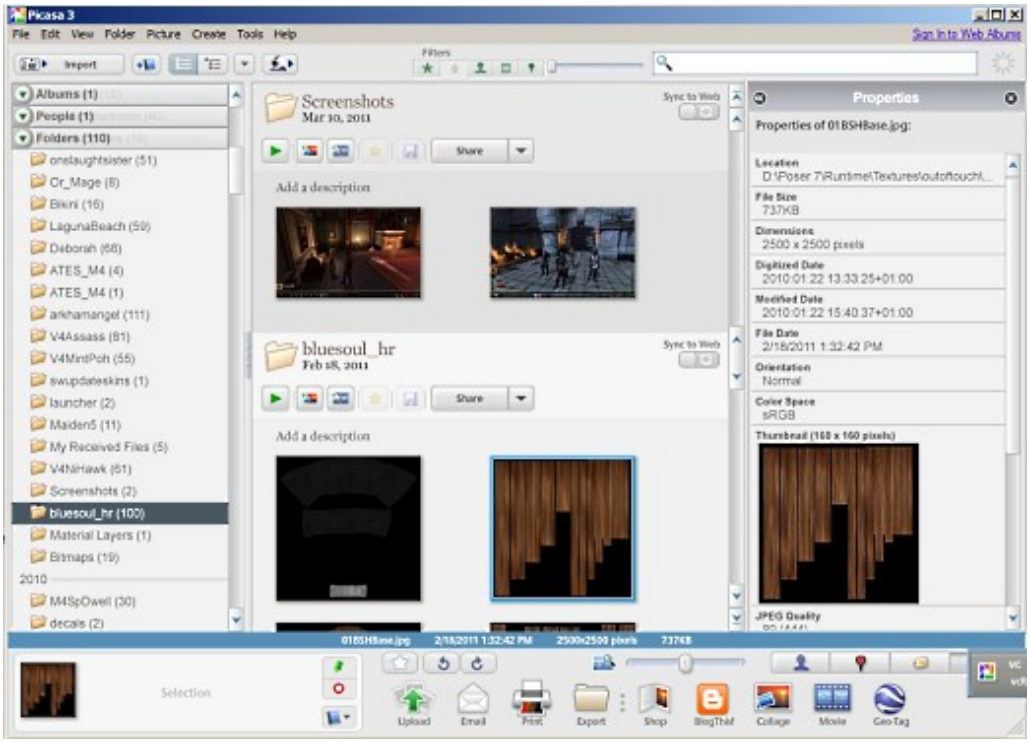
How to organize your images effectively

Wed, Nov 2 2011 19:04:19 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Those who work in a creative field, whether it's as a 3D modeler, or a web designer, usually end up with tons of images to deal with. These could be textures, resource files, projects you're working on, etc. If you dump them all in a single folder, it doesn't take long until you have thousands of files, and you can't find what you're looking for anymore. Here's a few ways you can effectively organize your images.

Picasa

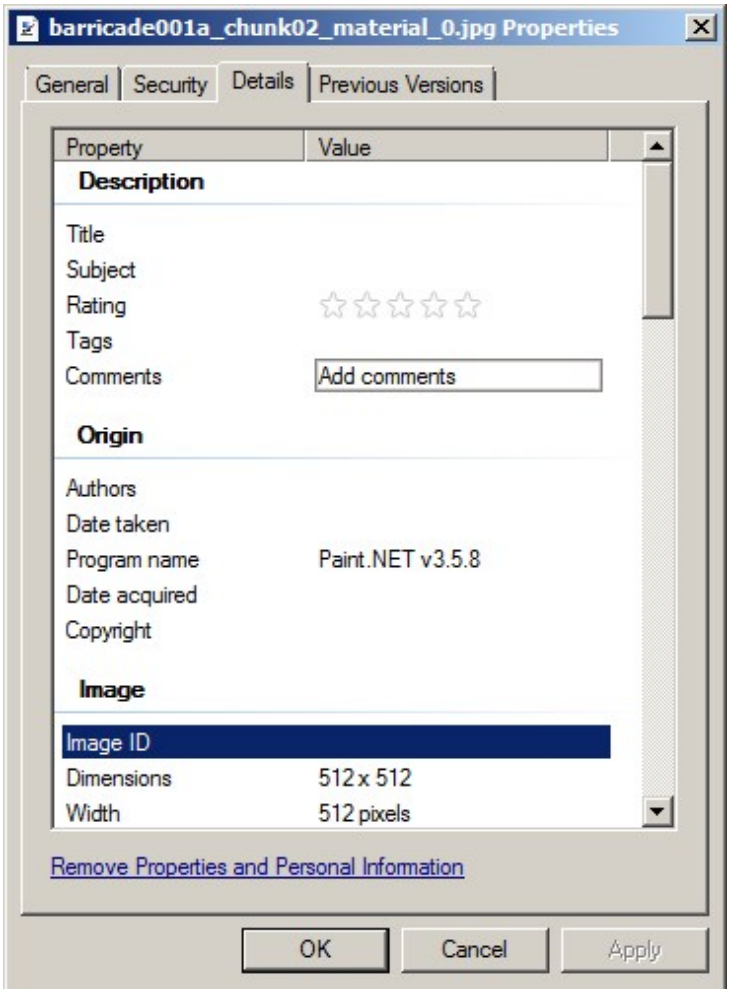
Google Picasa is actually a pretty decent option for keeping track of images. It's free, which is always a plus, and when you first install it, the program can look around and find all the images you already have on your system, which is a big plus when you already have lots of unorganized files. The default view shows you the images by folder, and you can easily add a description to each folder right there in the interface.



When you click on an image, you get properties like size and resolution right there on the right panel, and a search box at the top allows you to search by file name. Also, Picasa includes a sync function to the web version of the program, so this helps you keep a backup of all your images in the cloud, or if you have to work on two computers (work and home) then you can always be up to date on both systems.

Folders and metadata

Another way to work, if you would rather not use a specialized program, is simply using folders. If you're in Windows 7, you'll see that the Explorer interface is actually much better than before. If you right click on a file and choose properties, you can view all the metadata from the file. You can also add a name, title, comment, and so on to any file you want. This makes the search function even better than before. For example, you could add a comment to a file, and then when you search for a keyword across your system, it will take into account that comment.



Adobe Lightroom

A lot of people love Lightroom for managing photos, so it's worth including it here. Certainly, it has a lot of advanced features for organizing and editing files. However, there are drawbacks, mainly the fact that it isn't free, and also it's really made for photos, not images. There's a lot of popular file formats it doesn't see, for example.

Overall, it's up to you to decide how you want to organize your files, but if you work in the graphics industry, or even if it's just a hobby for you, then you should use some method, before ending up with thousands of images you can't make sense of anymore.

Doom 3 engine to be released soon

Wed, Nov 2 2011 18:22:50 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

Those gamers who've been waiting for the Doom 3 engine to be released open source, as promised a long time ago by id Software, shouldn't have to wait too long anymore. In a tweet, John Carmack confirmed that the release is ready to go, awaiting only final approval from lawyers. Running on id Tech 4, the predecessor to RAGE's current engine, Doom 3 introduced quite a few nice features, and its engine will be another option for developers to create games or mods with. The company has historically released its older engines as open source, and this one apparently won't be any different.

Behind the Wunderful Stuff

Wed, Nov 2 2011 17:15:05 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

TBWA, a London based advertising firm, made the very VFX heavy commercial for Muller called Wunderful Stuff. Here's a behind the scenes video showing how all the effects were done.

CityEngine 2011 released

Wed, Nov 2 2011 17:06:57 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

CityEngine is an interesting software tool that allows fast creation of 3D cities, to be used with popular modeling applications. The latest version, CityEngine 2011, has been released. Among the new features we can find new street editing tools, 3D viewport enhancements, advanced material management and automatic skeleton subdivision. A free trial is available.

EVE Online behind the scenes video part 2

Wed, Nov 2 2011 7:08:49 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Following last week's video, EVE Online producers released another behind the scenes video talking about the art design behind the upcoming expansion of the popular sci-fi MMO. In it, the artists discuss where they took some of their inspiration, and show off some of the concept art behind the new models. They also discuss some of the new technologies used to make them.

DeviantART addresses nude art

Tue, Nov 1 2011 23:00:59 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

We've talked in the past about the taboo nudity in art has, mostly inside western countries. Today DeviantART has a feature post about the topic of nude art. They address the thin line that nude art has to stand on, between empowering and demeaning, between art and porn, and how in the end it's entirely subjective.

Skyrim behind the scenes video

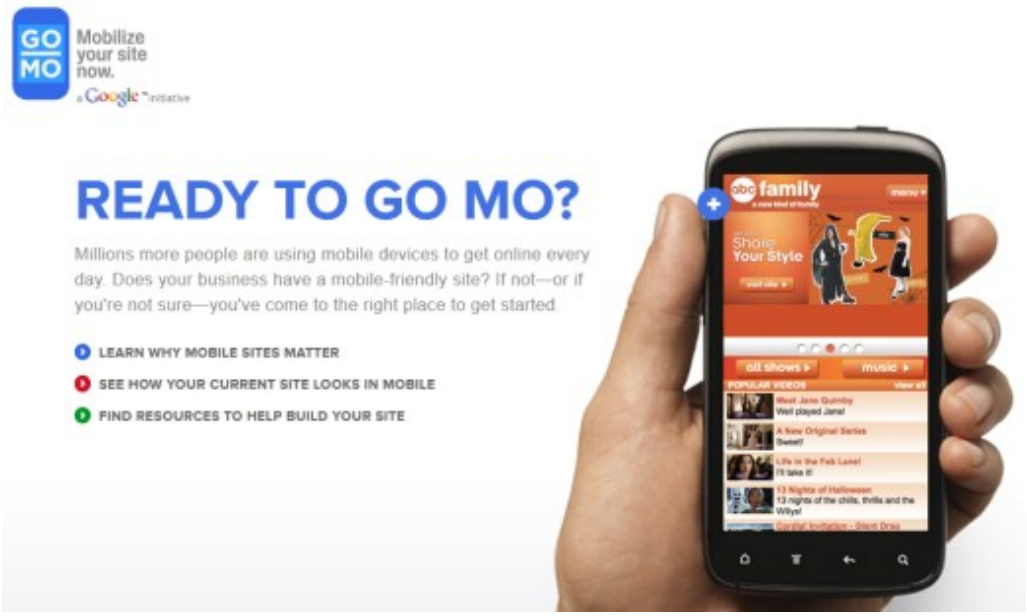
Tue, Nov 1 2011 22:41:21 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

*With **The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim** coming out soon and many gamers eagerly awaiting its arrival, Bethesda released another behind the scenes video showing the core team behind this and the previous Elder Scrolls games, where they talk about some of the hard work that went into making Skyrim, how it's different than previous releases, and showing some of the concept art and motion capture process.*

Google launched GoMo

Tue, Nov 1 2011 20:39:08 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

A lot of designers work in web development, on the task of creating great looking web sites. We often also have large, well lit displays. But the fact is many people access the web through mobile devices, and we need our sites to look good and be functional from a tiny screen as well. Google launched an initiative called GoMo, which is a project that helps web designers make their web sites mobile friendly.



On top of generic tips and tricks, the site allows you to enter your URL, and shows you what the site actually looks like on a mobile device. Then, it even goes so far as producing a custom made report in PDF format that gives you tips for improving your site. It's a very nice resource for anyone involved in web design.

Interview with Dreddon

Tue, Nov 1 2011 19:11:47 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under interviews

Today we have an interview with a 3D artist going by the nickname of Dreddon from the UK who creates some great Star Wars fan art.

Could you briefly describe yourself?

I'm Gareth, I'm 28 and from Cumbria, in the North of England, where it seems to rain all the time. I've been doing 3D for 5 years now after studying for a degree at the Cumbria institute of the Arts. Other than that, I'm a standard mix of nerd and gamer, dabbling a little bit in mountain biking.

How did you first become a fan of Star Wars?

I've been a fan for as long as I can remember. I grew up with seeing the original films on TV every Christmas when I was a kid. I've always loved sci-fi. Being into Warhammer 40k and Star Wars set me up to love any sort of sci-fi as a adult (The New Battlestar was amazing). I think a Mixture of computer games and Star Wars are the main reasons I got into doing Computer Graphics.

You've done some amazing Star Wars 3D art, what made you decide to do these pieces?

I've been excited for ToR for a while now, I mean a Star Wars MMO done by Bioware, who have made some of my favorite games ever, it was a no-brainer for me that I was going to play. I've played World of Warcraft and always thought about doing some Fan Art but I always put it off, so I decided before I get too caught up in playing the game I would create some Fan Art work.
*It just comes down to I'm a massive fan of ToR and bounty hunters are Kick *** cool.*

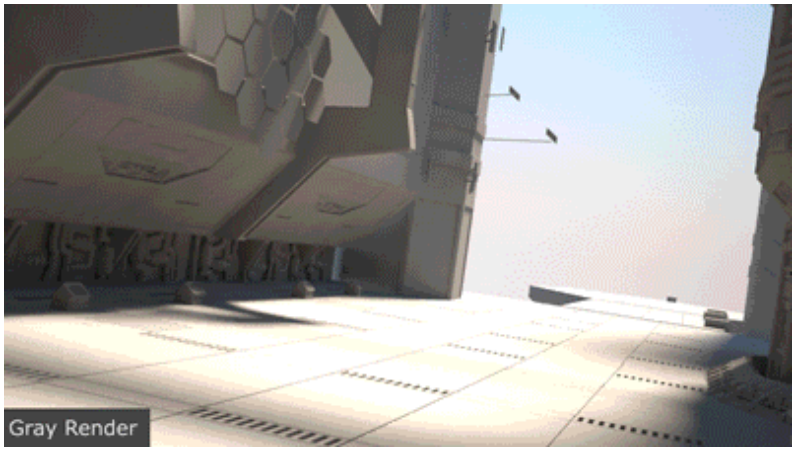
I'm also a massive fan of community creations, ie. podcasts, so I put in a Easter egg with a TOROcast logo in the background as a little fan service.

What software and tools do you use?

Zbrush, 3D Studio Max and Photoshop using Vray as the render in Max.

Can you walk us through what is involved in creating them?

Once I get an idea for an image, I start with mocking up a really quick concept, sculpt in Zbrush so I can get a feel for the character, and experiment with the form of the model. Then I take the concept to Max and start blocking out the individual elements. I bring them back to Zbrush, detail them up a bit, and work up the model. Once I'm happy with the the model, I unwrap it, bring it back to 3D Studio Max and start working on the textures. For the environment, I model only what I see and use really simple tiling textures.



The lighting is done with Vray, I light the character separately from the environment so it helps it stand out a little. I render some basic passes for the background and character so I have the flexibility to composite later in Photoshop. I use an Ambient Occlusion pass to put back some of the shadow details, then I finish with a paint over in Photoshop.

Were you surprised to be featured by Bioware on a fan Friday update?

It was a nice surprise, I put it up on the forums a while ago so I didn't think they were going to do another one until the game shipped so I was quite surprised.

How has feedback been from others so far?

Great, I think people seem to really like it and I have gotten positive feedback on the forums. People really like the fact I have given high resolution images for their desktop.

Are you working on anything else you can talk about?

Personal projects currently are my Imperial Agent and Ewok model which you can see some work in progress images on my SWTOR thread. I'm hoping that I can get a 3D print of the Ewok for my desk and I'm going to try and finish the Imperial Agent before the 20th of December. I have got a few professional projects on at the moment but I can't talk about them.

Anonymous team recreates medieval London

Tue, Nov 1 2011 17:28:24 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

*AWN has a short interview with the VFX team behind the new movie **Anonymous**, talking about how they recreated a complete medieval city for the movie. Through a combination of green screen footage, and the creation of thousands of 3D buildings for overview shots, they remade London in a matter of months.*

Before.

After.

Creating Maya shader that renders quickly

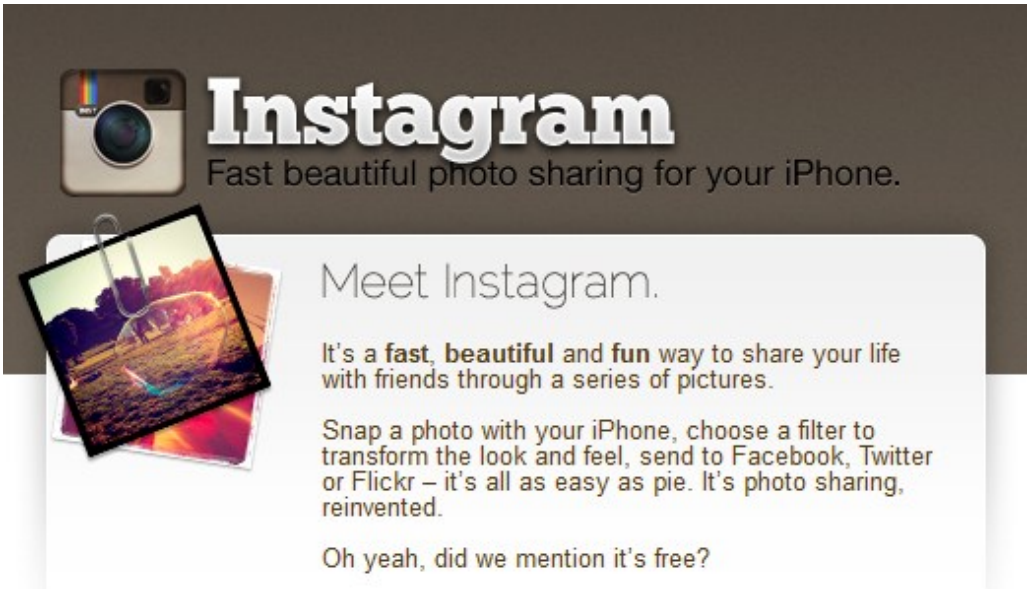
Tue, Nov 1 2011 17:11:23 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

Josh Robinson shows us how to create a simple, effective Maya shader with ambient occlusion to produce a good 3D render without long render times in this video tutorial.

Instagram co-founder talks at Disrupt Beijing

Tue, Nov 1 2011 9:12:31 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

*It's always interesting to see how adoption of new creative technologies occurs around the world, and we got some insight at the TechCrunch Disrupt Beijing conference, where **Instagram** co-founder Kevin Systrom talked a bit about their very popular iPhone app, revealing that it had passed 12 million users. It also sees 100k downloads from China alone every week. The service is run by 6 people, on over 100 servers.*



Many companies focus on the US market, but Kevin says he is focusing on the Asian market next, where he sees a lot of potential growth for innovative applications like Instagram. Translating the app interface was one of their early priorities. After being out for several months now, their growth is still accelerating, especially in other countries.

The moderator also revealed that there's over 10 clones of Instagram already in China. You can view the full interview on video here.

RED EPIC behind the scenes video

Tue, Nov 1 2011 8:39:39 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under videos

For video content creators out there, the people at StillMotion posted a behind the scenes video of what it's like to work with the new RED EPIC camera. The producers talk about some of the challenges of shooting under water footage, and some of the features the EPIC has to help in various situations.

Adobe acquires Auditude

Tue, Nov 1 2011 8:09:48 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under news

After acquiring Demdex earlier this year, today Adobe announced that they bought Auditude, a video advertising company. The terms are not known but rumored to be around $100 million, and this new acquisition will play a key part in Adobe's video platforms, such as Flash Media Server. The end result for video content creator is likely to eventually mean more targeted ads.

Halloween art showcase 2

Mon, Oct 31 2011 22:17:53 UTC by Patrick Lambert filed under features

Last week we posted some of the best Halloween related art made this year, here is part 2, featuring even more great art from artists around the world.